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THE SHARECROPPER AND WAGE LABORER IN COTTON PRODUCTION.

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The Sharecropper and Wage Laborer in Cotton Production

by

Ernest J. Holcomb

Division of Farm Population and Rural Welfare

Presented before a Subcommittee of the Committee
on Education and Labor

U. S. Senate
Pursuant to S. Res. 266
Washington, D. C., May, 1940

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SHARECROPPERS AND WAGE LABORERS IN SOUTHERN COTTON FARMS

Introduction

Data with respect to numbers of sharecroppers have been available only for census periods since 1920, for the 16 southern states, and no information has been available for other states. Furthermore, no basis of estimating numbers of sharecroppers between census periods is available as yet. Wage laborer data have been available since 1910 in the censuses, but these figures are not reliable due to inconsistencies in methods of reporting. Data based upon corrections allowed for the census figures, and the employment data of the Department of Agriculture's crop reporting service are available, however, for the period 1909-36, by areas. 1/

It appears that in 1935 there were 716,000 sharecropper families in the 16 southern states of which 537,000 were located in the 8 principal cotton producing states. 2/ There were 1,063,000 hired laborers in 14 of the 16 southern states in 1935, of which 737,000 were in the 8 principal cotton producing states.

The total number of workers of sharecropper families plus hired laborers was approximately 2,348,000 in 1935 in the eight cotton states, assuming three workers per sharecropper family. This would represent approximately 20 percent of all the persons employed in agriculture in the nation during that year. Croppers and laborers were concentrated in the upper Piedmont and upper Coastal Plains Areas of South Carolina and Georgia, the Black Belt of Alabama and Mississippi, the Bottom Land Areas of Arkansas, Mississippi, and Louisiana, and in the Black Land Area of Texas.

Distinction Between Sharecroppers and Wage Laborers

Sharecropping is ordinarily accepted as a form of tenancy, and it is so classified by the census. To a large extent, however, it is not unlike wage labor except in the method of payment and in the element of risk involved. In contrast to the fixed rates paid to wage laborers, the cropper's return for his labor is a fractional part -- usually one-half -- of the returns from the sale of the crops which he produces. With a sharecropper, as with a wage laborer, the earnings accrue entirely from human effort rather than from investments in land, machinery, or workstock. His tenure status does not depend upon control of land or of the use to which it is put. "From the standpoint of farm organization, whereby the land owner contributes the capital and equipment, and the cultivator of the land contributes the labor, and the land owner retains a large measure of control of both the land and equipment and the labor, the relationship is virtually that of employer and employee rather than that of landlord and tenant." 3/

1/ "Trends in Employment in Agriculture, 1909-36," by Shaw and Hopkins, Works Progress Administration, National Research Project Publication, A-8, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, November 1938, p. 86.

2/ South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, and Oklahoma.

3/ Brannen, C. O., "Plantation Organization," p. 31.

From the standpoint of risk, the cropper's position is similar to that of the tenant and the owner. He must accept the chance of weather and price conditions, for his labor returns depend upon the sale value of the crops which he produces. In this respect the cropper's position approaches that of a tenant. Usually, however, the direct burden of the risk falls upon the landowner, for the cropper's resources are limited, and he must depend upon credit advances from the owner for subsistence and such crop expenses as his agreement requires. Should these advances exceed the sale value of the cropper's share of the crop, the owner charges the excess against the succeeding year's crop or absorbs the loss himself. At best, then, the cropper status is a transitional one between a wage status and that of a tenant, but his position is more like that of a wage laborer.

Classification of Laborers on Southern Cotton Farms

A number of different types of laborers exist on cotton farms in southern states, and these types of laborers differ somewhat between the more general cotton areas. The three more general types of laborers, share labor, wage labor, and family labor, are common to all cotton areas. The exact form that the share and wage labor actually take, however, varies between parts of the cotton South.

Share Laborers

There are five distinct types of share laborers, the most common of which is the sharecropper. The other four types actually are derivatives of this type. Each type of share laborer is ordinarily furnished a house for himself and family, fuel which he cuts from the farmer's wood lot, a garden plot, water, and free pasture rights for a limited number of livestock.

(a) The sharecropper supplies all of the necessary labor to produce the crop, and he receives a fractional part (usually one-half) of that which he produces. In addition to the land, the owner supplies the equipment, the workstock and their feed, and the seed for planting. When fertilizers are used, the cropper usually is required to supply one-half of this. Each party to the agreement pays his proportionate share of the costs for ginning, bagging, and ties. This type of laborer is common to most of the Cotton Belt.

Variations in the agreements exist, but the half-share system is the more common. Among the variations are the one-third system and the two-fifths system, in which the landowners furnish all of such fertilizers as are used, and the croppers receive a smaller part of the crop. Other variations include sharing of the expense for planting seed, granting the sharecropper all of the corn which he produces on small acreages, and a multitude of variations involving minor crops and occasionally livestock.

(b) Hoe-croppers are frequently found in the Southeastern States. These are more frequently widows and children of deceased sharecroppers, although in some instances the male head of the family is a wage laborer. These workers perform all of the necessary labor in producing a crop, except that which is performed with the aid of workstock. In other words, they do the

"hoe" work for hoeing and chopping and the "hand" work for harvesting. They usually receive one-fourth of the crops grown on the land assigned to them, and pay one-fourth of any costs of fertilizer and ginning charges. The landowner furnishes, in addition to the land, the workstock and their feed, the equipment, the labor for plow work, the seed, and three-fourths of the fertilizer and ginning costs.

(c) Patch-croppers are more common to western Texas, although they are known to have been used in the Bottom Land Areas of Arkansas. This type of worker performs all of the labor necessary for producing the crops, exclusive of harvest. He receives the standing crops on specified tracts of the land which he has worked. The landowner furnishes, in addition to the land, the equipment, workstock and their feed or a tractor and fuel, the seed, and the fertilizer, if any is used. (Note: Fertilizers are seldom used in western Texas.) The patch-cropper must harvest the standing crops which are his wages, and pay ginning charges for his cotton, and any custom charges in the case of some of the other crops.

One example of this type of laborer is found among field records obtained in a cooperative study of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. 4/ In this instance the "patch-cropper" performed all of the necessary preharvest labor for a 160 acre tract of land, of which 59 acres were planted in cotton, 5 acres in corn, and the remainder (96 acres) in grain sorghums. In return for this labor he received the standing crops on 14-3/4 acres of cotton, 5 acres of corn, and 18-1/2 acres of grain sorghums, a total of 38-1/4 acres of standing crops, which he must harvest. In addition, he received a house for himself and family. His crop expenses included only the ginning, bagging, and tie charges for the cotton harvested from the 14-3/4 acres of cotton.

(d) Quasi-share laborers appear to be peculiar to the Bottom Lands Areas along the Mississippi River. They also appear to be associated with recent mechanization tendencies in that area. These workers are sometimes assigned nominal acreages of cotton -- three to five acres -- representing less than one-half the acreage normally assigned to sharecroppers, which is worked on a sharecropper basis. In addition, they must work for the landowner in his wage crops. 5/ They ordinarily receive a major part of their earnings from wage labor, and the earnings obtained from the acreage worked under sharecropping conditions are supplemental. The sharecrop serves to hold the laborer on the farm for peak labor needs. The owner's crops, where such labor is used, usually are worked by tractor power, except for the hoe work and picking requirements.

A variation of this is that similar to the hoe-cropper arrangement, in which a nominal acreage of cotton is assigned to the worker, and he performs the necessary labor exclusive of the plow work which is furnished by the landowner in the form of tractor power, and charges are assessed against

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4/ Study of sharecropping and share renting arrangements conducted by the Division of Program Planning, A.A.A. in cooperation with the B.A.E. and the Agricultural Experiment Station in 9 southern states in 1939.

5/ The landowner's crops are commonly called wage crops since they are worked by the operator's family labor and wage labor.

the worker for this service. The worker receives one-half the value of the crop, less deductions for the plow work and the other usual charges. In addition, the worker is employed at wages in the owner's crops.

In both cases the worker receives a house for himself and family, fuel which he cuts from the owner's wood lot, water, a garden plot, and limited pasturage rights for such livestock as he may have. This type of laborer appears to be indicative of future trends for the Southeastern States when and if labor saving mechanized equipment can be employed in the place of mule and horse power. It also may be indicative of the tendency toward the more complete transition from share to wage labor.

(e) Non-managing share tenants might well be considered as laborers, probably of a type slightly higher on the agricultural ladder than sharecroppers. It is difficult to differentiate this type from the managing share tenant, but in order to recognize its existence it is included. Share tenants, who work under the supervision of the landowner and who exercise little or no control over the land or of the use to which it is put, are scarcely more than laborers. In other occupations many laborers also own the tools with which they work. Their earnings accrue from the ownership of equipment and workstock as well as labor, which distinguishes them from sharecroppers. This type of labor is more commonly found on the larger farms or plantations in the Mid-South and in the southeastern areas. They are granted privileges similar to those granted sharecroppers. They ordinarily receive three-fourths of the cotton crop and two-thirds of other crops produced. They furnish three-fourths of the fertilizers, all of the seed for planting, the labor, three-fourths of the ginning, bagging, and tie charges, the workstock and their feed, and equipment.

Variations exist with respect to fractional shares. Two variations in existence are the half-share arrangement and the three-fifths arrangement, in which the owner furnishes all of the fertilizers, and seed for planting. The tenant pays one-half or three-fifths, as the case may be, of the ginning, bagging, and tie costs, which is the share of the crop he receives. Other variations are also in use.

Wage Laborers

Two general types of wage laborers -- regular and seasonal -- are used throughout the Cotton Belt. Either general type of labor may take the form of single individuals or families of laborers. As a rule, however, the regular labor force lives on the farm of their employer, and the seasonal labor force lives elsewhere. Regular wage laborers, living on the farm, ordinarily have privileges like those granted share laborers, that is, they are given a house for themselves and family, water, limited pasturage rights for their livestock, if they possess any, and wood for fuel which they cut from the landowner's wood lots. The male heads of families of wage laborers are usually employed steadily, or as steadily as sharecroppers, while the other members of the family usually obtain only part-time employment. In this respect the working members other than the male head of the family are virtually resident seasonal laborers.

Seasonal wage laborers may come from local sources or non-local sources. In most of the South, seasonal wage laborers are supplied from points within daily commuting distances, although some workers do migrate into areas from non-local points. In Texas and Oklahoma, particularly, migrant or non-local laborers are especially important in cotton production.

Local seasonal wage laborers come from families of other farm people and from nearby urban areas. Frequently, in the South, they are drawn from other occupations, particularly the domestic servants.

Migrant laborers in cotton, outside of the Southwest, exist in small numbers in virtually every area, but little interstate migration is believed to be developed as yet. Increasing mechanization of preharvest operations may stimulate an increase of this type of labor.

According to the Census of 1930, one-third of all farm wage workers in the 16 southern states lived elsewhere than on farms in rural areas. Slightly more than one-fourth of all wage workers lived in population centers of less than 2,500 persons, and 7 percent lived in urban areas. In the eight principal cotton states 70.6 percent of the farm wage workers lived on farms in rural areas and 29.4 percent lived elsewhere. In the Eastern (South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama) and Delta (Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas) Cotton Areas the proportions of wage workers not living on farms were 26.8 percent and 28.0 percent, respectively. In the Western Cotton Area (Texas and Oklahoma) 33.1 percent did not live on farms.

Family Laborers

Family laborers consist of heads of families and their family members, the farm operator's family included. This type of labor, obviously, is common to all parts of the Cotton Belt. Its importance tends to vary, not so much by areas, but by sizes of farms or operating units. The larger the farming unit, the less the relative importance of the family labor within the area.

Labor Organization in Cotton Production

The labor organization on southern cotton farms takes various forms in the various areas. Generally, however, sharecropper labor is more in use in the eastern sections of the southern cotton areas, and wage labor is more in use in the western areas.

In the Eastern Cotton Area (South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama) the major dependence is placed upon the use of sharecropper labor; in the Delta Cotton Area (Mississippi, Arkansas, and Louisiana) wage labor appears to be of increasing importance, although sharecroppers are still the major source of labor; while in the Western Cotton Area (Texas and Oklahoma) wage labor is by far the more important.

In the Eastern and Delta Areas, individual farms may employ only share labor or wage labor, but the more common labor organization consists of both wage labor and share labor. In the Delta Area there is an increasing tendency

to use the "quasi-share laborers," those who work nominal acreages on a share basis and obtain most of their earnings from wage labor. In the Western Area (Texas and Oklahoma), and in particular in the plains sub-areas of those states, the wage laborer is used, and a considerable dependence is placed upon non-local seasonal labor for harvest. In the eastern parts of Texas and Oklahoma, sharecropper labor is still important.

The "through and through" system is sometimes employed on the larger farms with sharecropper labor. It is believed that in recent years there has been an increasing tendency toward the use of this system. Under the "through and through" system, sharecroppers seldom know which part of the large fields of cotton are actually theirs, for all of them work in all of the fields. Immediately prior to the harvest the tracts are assigned to the various sharecropper families for harvest. For all preharvest work the landowner debits the individual's account for labor performed on other tracts, and credits the account for the labor of others on his tract. At settlement time the cropper learns what charges have been assessed against his account; what he has earned from the other workers, the value of his sharecrop sales, the amount of his "furnish" account, and the cash settlement due him.

From the operator's point of view the system is desirable, for he can use his labor force most advantageously. If tractor power is used, even greater efficiency is obtained. There is an alleged advantage from the operator's point of view in not telling the laborer which is his tract of cotton, for if he knows he will work less effectively on the others' crops. The gregarious instincts of the workers, so it is said, makes this system more enjoyable to the workers than working as individual families.

From the worker's point of view, his part is no longer that of an individual cultivator, but he becomes a part of a mass production scheme. In any event, whatever the individual superiority of workmanship that exists, it goes unrewarded. Furthermore, a great deal depends upon the integrity of the owner as to the final outcome from the year's labor of the worker. Under this arrangement even the "good boss man" is subjected to the natural scepticism of the workers.

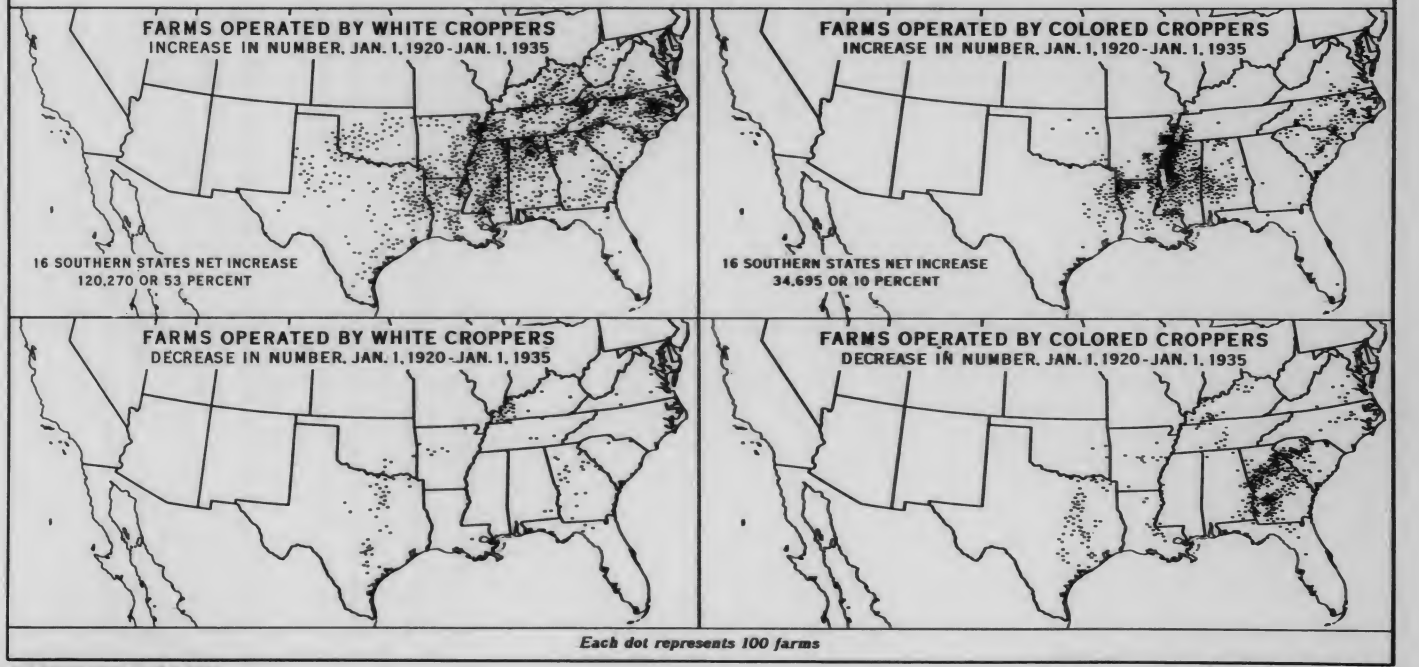
Recent Changes Between Types of Laborers

Figure 1. It has already been pointed out that in 1935 sharecroppers were concentrated in the river bottoms areas along the Mississippi, the upper Piedmont and the upper coastal plains areas of South Carolina and Georgia, and in the Black Belt of Alabama and Mississippi.

Between 1920-35 increases in the number of sharecroppers occurred principally in the bottom lands areas of the Mississippi and Red Rivers and in the plains areas of Texas and Oklahoma. Decreases occurred principally in the upper Piedmont of South Carolina and Georgia, the upper coastal plains of Georgia, and in the black lands of Texas.

FARMS OPERATED BY WHITE AND BY COLORED CROPPERS

Changes in Number, Jan. 1, 1920-Jan. 1, 1935


FARMS OPERATED BY WHITE CROPPERS
INCREASE IN NUMBER, JAN. 1, 1920-JAN. 1, 1935
16 SOUTHERN STATES NET INCREASE
120,270 OR 53 PERCENT
FARMS OPERATED BY COLORED CROPPERS
INCREASE IN NUMBER, JAN. 1, 1920-JAN. 1, 1935
16 SOUTHERN STATES NET INCREASE
34,695 OR 10 PERCENT
FARMS OPERATED BY WHITE CROPPERS
DECREASE IN NUMBER, JAN. 1, 1920-JAN. 1, 1935
FARMS OPERATED BY COLORED CROPPERS
DECREASE IN NUMBER, JAN. 1, 1920-JAN. 1, 1935

Each dot represents 100 farms

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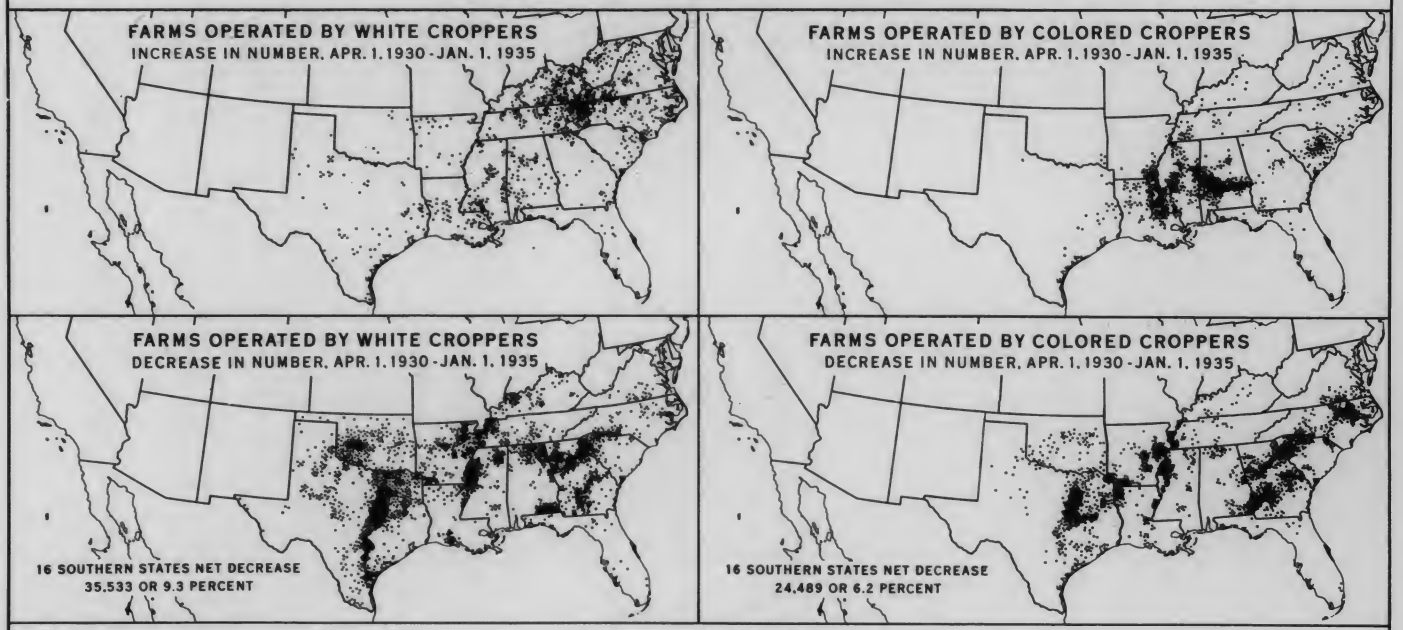
Changes Between 1930-35

Figure 2 shows the changes in the number of sharecroppers between 1930 and 1935 for white and colored croppers. The increases of white sharecroppers occurred largely in the more mountainous areas of Tennessee, North Carolina, Kentucky and Virginia. Some increases are shown for white croppers in the Bluff Areas of Mississippi surrounding the more fertile bottom lands of the Yazoo and the Mississippi rivers, and in the poorer upland areas of Louisiana. Increases of colored sharecroppers occurred largely in the Black Belt of Alabama and Mississippi, in the Bluff Areas of Mississippi, in the lower bottom lands areas of the Mississippi river in Arkansas and Louisiana, and in the upper coastal plains area of South Carolina.

Decreases of white and colored sharecroppers occurred in the Upper Piedmont Areas of South Carolina and Georgia; the upper coastal plains areas of North Carolina, Georgia and Alabama; the Sand Hills Area of Alabama; the Bottom land areas of Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana and Texas; the Black lands of Texas; in the High and Low Plains; and in the Corpus Christi areas of Texas; and in southwestern Oklahoma.

FARMS OPERATED BY WHITE AND COLORED CROPPERS

Changes in Number, Apr. 1, 1930 - Jan. 1, 1935


FARMS OPERATED BY WHITE CROPPERS
INCREASE IN NUMBER, APR. 1, 1930 - JAN. 1, 1935
FARMS OPERATED BY COLORED CROPPERS
INCREASE IN NUMBER, APR. 1, 1930 - JAN. 1, 1935
FARMS OPERATED BY WHITE CROPPERS
DECREASE IN NUMBER, APR. 1, 1930 - JAN. 1, 1935
16 SOUTHERN STATES NET DECREASE
35,533 OR 9.3 PERCENT
FARMS OPERATED BY COLORED CROPPERS
DECREASE IN NUMBER, APR. 1, 1930 - JAN. 1, 1935
16 SOUTHERN STATES NET DECREASE
24,489 OR 6.2 PERCENT

Each dot represents 25 farms

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CHANGES IN THE NUMBER OF CROPPERS BY STATES, 1920-35

Table 1 shows the changes in the number of sharecroppers between 1920, 1930, and 1935. Increases occurred in every state between 1920 and 1930, but decreases occurred between 1930 and 1935 in the states of Alabama, Georgia, Arkansas, Texas, Oklahoma, Florida, and North Carolina. More than three-fourths of the sharecroppers reported in 16 southern states were located in the 8 principal cotton producing states. In the latter group of states, the more pronounced changes occurred in Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, and Oklahoma between 1920 and 1930. In these states increases ranging between 54 and 136 percent over the respective numbers for 1920 occurred. Between 1930 and 1935 decreases ranging between 12 and 35 percent occurred in Alabama, Georgia, Arkansas, Texas, and Oklahoma. Only South Carolina, of the eight principal cotton producing states, showed any particular increase, in which case there was a 39 percent increase.

The more radical changes occurred in the Western Cotton Area, where a 63.2 percent increase in the number of sharecroppers occurred between 1920 and 1930, only to be followed by a 28.6 percent decrease between 1930 and 1935. In the Delta Cotton Area a 56.6 percent increase occurred between 1920 and 1930, but the change between 1930 and 1935 was negligible (a 2.7 percent decrease). In the Eastern Area the changes were in the same directions as in the other areas, but less marked, for an increase of 13.6 percent occurred in this area between 1920 and 1930, and a decrease of 9.4 percent between 1930 and 1935.

Table 1.- Changes in number and percent of sharecroppers, by states and areas, 1920-1935

State and area	1920	1930	Change 1920-30		1935	Change 1930-35	
	Number	Number	Number	Percent	Number	Number	Percent
Eastern cotton area:							
Alabama	47,897	65,134	+ 17,237	+ 36.0	46,238	-18,896	-29.0
South Carolina	43,789	48,939	+ 5,150	+ 11.8	67,974	+19,035	+38.9
Georgia	97,497	100,854	+ 3,357	+ 3.4	80,425	-20,429	-20.3
Total	189,183	214,927	+ 25,744	+ 13.6	194,637	-20,290	- 9.4
Delta cotton area:							
Arkansas	47,665	75,034	+ 27,369	+ 57.4	65,603	- 9,431	-12.6
Mississippi	86,859	135,293	+ 48,434	+ 55.8	136,913	+ 1,620	+ 1.2
Louisiana	31,309	49,428	+ 18,119	+ 57.9	50,219	+ 791	+ 1.6
Total	165,833	259,755	+ 93,922	+ 56.6	252,735	- 7,020	- 2.7
Western cotton area:							
Texas	68,381	105,122	+ 36,741	+ 53.7	76,468	-28,654	-27.3
Oklahoma	8,926	21,055	+ 12,129	+135.9	13,640	- 7,415	-35.2
Total	77,307	126,177	+ 48,870	+ 63.2	90,108	-36,069	-28.6
Three cotton areas	432,323	600,859	+168,536	+ 39.0	537,480	-63,379	-10.5
Other areas:							
Florida	4,291	4,816	+ 525	+ 12.2	4,674	- 142	- 2.9
Delaware	208	225	+ 17	+ 8.2	275	+ 50	+22.2
Maryland	1,459	1,646	+ 187	+ 12.8	1,661	+ 15	+ 0.9
Virginia	13,715	17,253	+ 3,538	+ 25.8	18,239	+ 986	+ 5.7
West Virginia	1,628	1,834	+ 206	+ 12.7	3,043	+ 1,209	+65.9
North Carolina	39,939	69,091	+ 29,152	+ 73.0	66,393	- 2,698	- 3.9
Kentucky	29,450	30,250	+ 800	+ 2.7	33,014	+ 2,764	+ 9.1
Tennessee	38,078	50,304	+ 12,226	+ 32.1	51,477	+ 1,173	+ 2.3
Total	128,768	175,419	+ 46,651	+ 36.2	178,776	+ 3,357	+ 1.9
Total United States 1/	561,091	776,278	+215,187	+ 38.4	716,256	-60,022	- 7.7

1/ 16 Southern States.
Bureau of the Census.

CHANGES IN THE NUMBER OF HIRED WORKERS, 1909-36

Table 2 shows the trend in the number of hired workers in the three principal cotton producing areas during the period 1909-36. In the Eastern Cotton Area and the Delta Cotton Area decreases in the number of hired workers occurred, but in the Western Cotton Area an increase occurred between 1909 and 1929. During the period 1929-34 decreases occurred in the number of hired workers in the Eastern and Western Areas, but in the Delta Area after 1929 the decline in the number of hired workers continued only through 1932.

During the periods 1920-30 and 1930-35, the periods for which sharecropper data are shown in Table 1, above, the changes for hired laborers are as follows:

1. Eastern Area: 1920-30, an increase of 1,000 or 0.3 percent
   1930-35, a decrease of 4,000 or 1.4 percent

2. Delta Area: 1920-30, a decrease of 20,000 or 8.4 percent
   1930-35, an increase of 9,000 or 4.1 percent

3. Western Area: 1920-30, a decrease of 1,000 or 3.5 percent
   1930-35, a decrease of 63,000 or 22.3 percent

Table 2.- Trends in numbers of hired workers in the three principal cotton areas, 1909-36

Year	Eastern Cotton Area: Average number hired workers (thousands)	Eastern Cotton Area: Index (1924-29 = 100)	Delta Cotton Area: Average number hired workers (thousands)	Delta Cotton Area: Index (1924-29 = 100)	Western Cotton Area: Average number hired workers (thousands)	Western Cotton Area: Index (1924-29 = 100)
1909	319	102	257	114	237	79
1910	317	101	255	113	241	81
1911	316	101	252	112	244	82
1912	314	100	252	112	250	84
1913	313	100	252	112	256	86
1914	312	100	251	112	262	88
1915	311	99	251	112	267	89
1916	312	100	252	112	275	92
1917	305	97	245	109	274	92
1918	297	95	237	105	270	90
1919	289	92	232	103	267	89
1920	294	94	237	105	284	95
1921	299	96	236	105	285	95
1922	303	97	238	106	288	96
1923	297	95	234	104	288	96
1924	297	95	222	99	290	97
1925	299	96	212	94	293	98
1926	327	104	240	107	305	102
1927	328	105	222	99	284	95
1928	308	98	227	101	295	99
1929	318	102	227	101	326	109
1930	295	94	217	96	283	95
1931	287	92	200	89	271	91
1932	283	90	183	81	249	83
1933	275	88	215	96	217	73
1934	275	88	226	100	210	70
1935	291	93	226	100	220	74
1936	292	93	242	107	236	79

Obtained from "Trends in Employment in Agriculture, 1909-36" by Shaw and Hopkins, Works Progress Administration National Research Project Publication A-8, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, November 1938.

Changes in Cotton Harvested Acres, 1909-36

In Table 3 the changes in the number of acres from which cotton was harvested are shown. For the United States the acreage has ranged roughly between 30 million and 45 million acres during the period 1909-36. Between 1909 and 1920 the range was between 30 million and 36 million acres. During the period 1920-30 the range was between 29 million and 45 million acres with a noticeable increase between 1920 and 1926, and a slight decline between 1926 and 1930. After 1930 a more rapid decline occurred, particularly between 1932 and 1934.

More than 90 percent of the cotton acres harvested were in the eight principal cotton producing States, but the changes as between the three cotton areas varied. In the Eastern Cotton Area the trend in acres of cotton harvested has been generally downward since 1909. In the Delta Cotton Area the trend was upward through 1930, and downward since that date. In the Western Cotton Area the trend was upward between 1909 and 1925, but since 1925 it has been downward.

Attempts to reconcile the changes in cotton acres harvested with changes in number of croppers and hired workers proved almost futile. This is partially due to a lack of data on the number of sharecroppers between census periods. Furthermore, for accurate interpretations, analysis should be made for smaller and more homogeneous areas than the three general areas. Price and wage changes, and technological differences should be considered, also.

In the Eastern Area increases in numbers of croppers and hired workers occurred between 1920 and 1930 despite a reduction in cotton acreage harvested. Since 1930 only nominal decreases in croppers and hired laborers accompanied a marked reduction in cotton acreage harvested.

In the Delta Area a sharp increase in the number of sharecroppers accompanied the acreage increase between 1920 and 1930, but there was a net reduction of 20,000 hired workers. The acreage decrease during 1930-35 which brought the total number of harvested acres of cotton to 774,000 acres below the 1920 acreage, and 3,591,000 acres below the 1930 acreage, was accompanied by a decrease of only 7,020 croppers and an increase of 9,000 hired laborers.

In the Western Area, between 1920 and 1930, there was an acreage increase of 4,697,000, and the number of croppers increased by 48,870, but the number of hired laborers declined by 1,000. Between 1930 and 1935, the decline of 7,092,000 acres was accompanied by a decline of 36,069 croppers and 63,000 hired laborers.

Table 3.- Changes in acreages devoted to cotton in United States and in the three principal cotton areas, 1909-36
(In thousands)

Year	United States Total	Eastern Cotton Area	Delta Cotton Area	Western Cotton Area	Other Areas
1909	30,555	10,275	6,119	11,874	1,939
1910	31,508	10,399	6,167	12,536	2,014
1911	34,916	11,380	6,399	14,317	2,359
1912	32,557	10,652	5,680	13,721	2,163
1913	35,206	10,656	6,341	15,594	2,263
1914	35,615	11,575	6,449	14,870	2,298
1915	29,951	9,894	5,402	12,391	1,936
1916	33,071	10,196	6,603	13,482	2,413
1917	32,245	9,152	6,180	14,121	2,443
1918	35,038	10,173	7,002	15,082	2,503
1919	32,906	9,931	6,647	13,752	2,346
1920	34,408	9,379	6,776	15,370	2,625
1921	28,678	7,772	5,841	12,776	2,109
1922	31,361	7,144	6,548	14,794	2,537
1923	35,550	7,303	6,924	17,985	2,878
1924	39,501	7,663	7,194	20,852	3,184
1925	44,386	8,869	8,730	22,624	3,483
1926	44,608	9,302	8,910	22,360	3,429
1927	38,342	8,242	7,500	19,290	2,897
1928	42,434	8,762	9,016	20,894	3,283
1929	43,232	8,906	9,412	20,989	3,429
1930	42,444	8,959	9,593	20,067	3,275
1931	38,704	8,124	9,111	18,130	2,819
1932	35,891	7,328	8,854	16,442	2,732
1933	29,383	5,859	6,662	13,939	2,462
1934	26,866	5,561	5,886	12,744	2,235
1935	27,335	5,760	6,002	12,975	2,186
1936	30,054	6,020	6,905	14,124	2,514

Obtained from "Changes in Technology and Labor Requirements in Crop Production, Cotton," by W. C. Holley and Lloyd E. Arnold, W.P.A. National Research Project, Report No. A-7. Philadelphia, Pa. Sept. 1938.

Comparison of Changes in Cotton-Lint Prices [1] in Relation to Wage Rates [2] with Changes in the Percentages of Tenants and Laborers [3]

Table 7 shows for the three principal cotton areas a comparison of changes in pricing cotton lint expressed as a percentage of demand with changes in the percentage of tenants (including croppers) and changes in the percentage of laborers. The theory suggesting this comparison is that as prices tend to rise more rapidly than wage rates there will be a tendency for farm operators to substitute wage labor for share labor, and as prices decline more rapidly than wage rates, the tendency will be toward the use of more share labor.

The theory appears to be true, although this table does not establish it as a fact. The incompleteness of the data for tenants and laborers is one determent and the inability to separate out for the complete period the proportion of the tenants that were share tenants and sharecroppers and the proportion of the laborers that were wage laborers is another. Had these data been available, a more complete understanding of the basic causes of many of farm labor and tenancy problems might have been available.

The theory appears to hold true, in spite of the inadequacy of the data, except for two periods. The first is the period between 1910 and 1920, during which the war of 1914-18 is believed to have created a labor shortage which affected the relationship. The second is the period, between 1930 and 1935, in which the restraining influence with respect to changes in numbers of tenants and croppers included in the Agricultural Adjustment and the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Acts may have affected the otherwise logical reaction.

Comparisons of changes should be made with the changes immediately prior to the years for which labor and tenancy data are available.

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[1] Basic data obtained from Agricultural Statistics.
[2] Computed from Agricultural Marketing Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture wage rate series wage rates per day without board.
[3] Based on unpublished manuscript by C. L. Stewart and A. H. Harrington, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois, for the period 1880-1900; "Trends in Employment in Agriculture, 1909-36" by Shaw and Hopkins, WPA, National Research Project Report A-8, November 1938, for the period 1910-35.

Table 7.- Comparison of changes in cotton lint prices in relation to wage rates with changes in the percentage of agriculturally employed persons that are tenants and laborers in the three principal cotton areas, 1880-1935

Year	Index of price of cotton lint	Ratio of price of cotton lint index to wage rate without board index			Percentage of agriculturally employed that are tenants			Percentage of agriculturally employed that are laborers		
		Eastern	Delta	Western	Eastern	Delta	Western	Eastern	Delta	Western
1880	89.5	137.3	117.8	135.0	18.3	13.5	20.8	61.1	63.6	44.7
1881	97.1	142.2	116.6	142.0						
1882	83.1	116.4	112.0	124.0						
1883	83.1									
1884	83.7									
1885	76.4	111.9	99.3	108.2						
1886	73.4									
1887	77.9									
1888	77.4	105.3	100.6	113.2						
1889	77.9									
1890	78.2	107.9	98.1	111.9	24.6	19.7	24.6	52.9	54.7	38.9
1891	65.9									
1892	76.0	106.4	97.7	107.6						
1893	63.8	106.3	96.8	96.2						
1894	41.8	77.7	72.4	65.9						
1895	69.4	131.4	124.2	126.6						
1896	60.7									
1897	60.8									
1898	52.2	90.0	77.0	78.7						
1899	63.6	107.8	92.6	91.9						
1900	83.3				29.6	29.0	30.6	50.1	47.7	36.6
1901	64.0									
1902	69.2	104.4	86.8	88.2						
1903	95.5									
1904	81.8									
1905	98.2									
1906	87.2	90.6	82.8	92.4						
1907	94.4									
1908	82.1									
1909	123.9	144.2	135.3	136.4						
1910	127.0	126.5	125.0	125.9	26.6	26.1	26.6	57.9	55.3	50.1
1911	87.4	87.1	88.4	90.6						
1912	104.6	102.0	103.9	103.7						
1913	113.9	110.0	111.0	112.9						
1914	67.0	71.9	69.6	66.4						
1915	102.2	113.4	106.2	99.9						
1916	157.8	160.5	151.1	146.0						
1917	247.0	192.4	191.3	182.4						
1918	263.4	153.3	143.8	147.4						
1919	322.5	146.9	146.7	130.9						
1920	145.0	59.1	58.2	54.7	29.9	30.5	28.2	52.7	48.2	46.4
1921	154.9	123.6	118.2	108.5						
1922	208.3	172.0	149.6	159.7						

Table 7 Cont'd.

Year	Index of price of cotton lint	Ratio of price of cotton lint index to wage rate without board index			Percentage of agriculturally employed that are tenants			Percentage of agricultural ly employed that are laborers		
		Eastern	Delta	Western	Eastern	Delta	Western	Eastern	Delta	Western
1923	261.3	213.8	196.8	198.2						
1924	208.7	151.6	148.0	141.3						
1925	178.4	124.8	121.8	121.9						
1926	113.6	78.4	76.5	75.1						
1927	183.9	129.7	127.1	126.4						
1928	163.8	116.3	116.2	113.1						
1929	152.9	111.9	106.3	107.1						
1930	86.2	69.4	65.4	66.5	30.9	36.3	34.3	53.2	46.5	43.9
1931	51.5	56.5	55.1	53.8						
1932	59.4	89.6	83.2	81.6						
1933	92.6	149.1	136.6	132.5						
1934	112.6	143.1	146.4	137.0						
1935	101.0	126.7	123.9	118.8	31.4	34.9	36.0	51.2	46.3	38.2
1936	112.3	133.8	131.8	123.7						
1937	76.6	83.2	81.2	75.4						
1938	78.2	88.9	84.5	78.1						
1939										
1940										

Percentage in Each Tenure Group in the Three Principal Cotton Areas, 1880-1935 /

The three preceding tables suggested (1) that changes in tenure groups other than sharecroppers and wage laborers were occurring; (2) that changes in prices and wage rates should be considered; (3) that technological difference should be included; and (4) that analysis should be made for smaller and more homogeneous areas.

Figure 3 shows the percentage in each tenure group between 1880 and 1935 for the three areas. The proportion of all those employed in agriculture that were owners has declined in each of the three areas. The proportion that were tenants, including croppers, has increased. The proportion that were laborers (hired and family workers) has declined slightly.

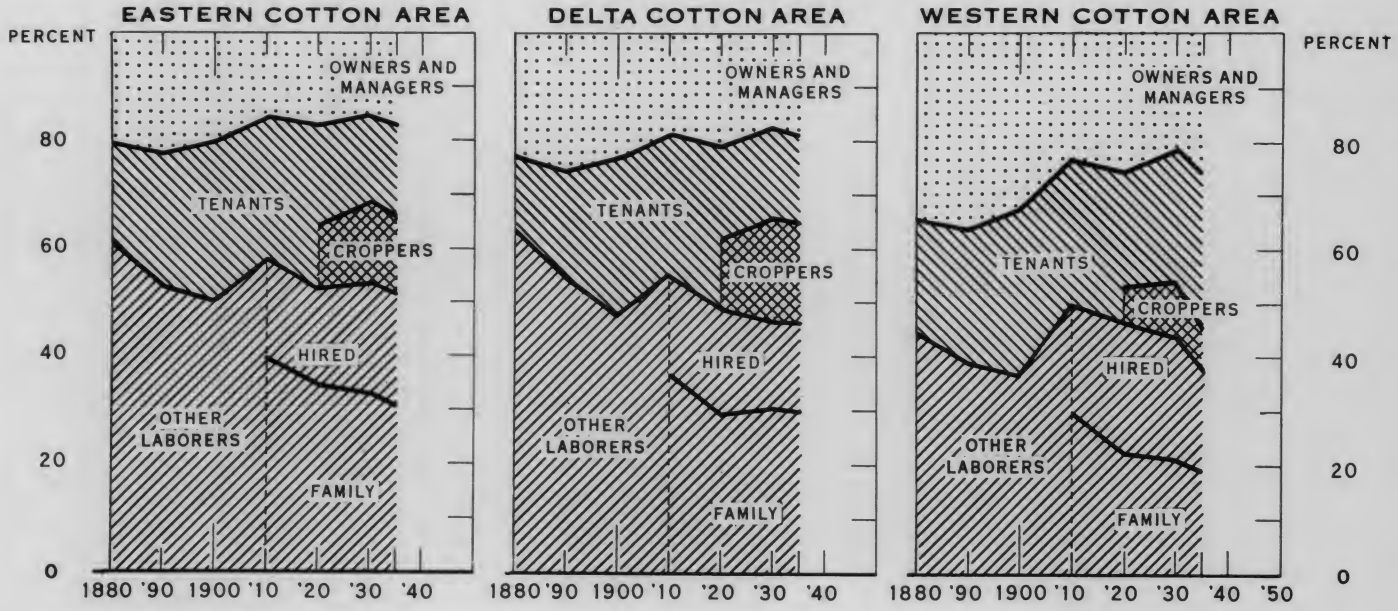
In the Eastern Area, owners declined from 20.6 percent in 1880 to 15.5 percent in 1910. In 1920 and 1935, owners represented 17.4 percent of all those engaged in agriculture in the area, but in 1930 they were 15.8 percent. Tenants, including croppers, increased from 18.3 percent in 1880 to 31.4 percent in 1935. Since 1920, when it was first possible to separate tenants from croppers, tenants have decreased from 18.1 percent to 15.9 percent in 1930, and increased to 17.6 percent in 1935. Croppers were 11.8 percent in 1920, and they increased to 15.0 percent in 1930 and decreased to 13.8 percent in 1935. Since 1910, when it was first possible to separate hired laborers from family laborers, hired laborers have increased from 18.2 percent to 20.6 percent in 1935. Family workers, during the same period (1910-35) decreased from 39.7 percent to 30.6 percent.

In the Delta Area, the percentage of all those employed in agriculture that were owners declined from 22.9 percent in 1880 and 25.6 percent in 1890 to 17.2 percent in 1930 and 18.8 percent in 1935. Tenants, including croppers, were 13.5 percent in 1880 and increased to 36.3 percent in 1930 and 34.9 percent in 1935. Since 1920, tenants excluding croppers declined from 17.1 percent to 16.4 percent in 1935. Croppers, on the other hand, increased from 13.4 percent in 1920 to 19.4 percent in 1930 and 18.5 percent in 1935. Laborers (hired and family laborers) were 63.6 percent in 1880 and they declined to 46.3 percent in 1935. Hired laborers were 18.7 percent in 1910, but they increased to 19.2 percent in 1920 and declined to 16.5 percent in 1935.

/ Based upon unpublished manuscript by C. L. Stewart and A. H. Harrington, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois, for the period 1880 to 1900; "Trends in Employment in Agriculture, 1909-36" by Shaw and Hopkins, WPA National Research Publication A-8, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, November 1938; and the Census.

In the Western Area, owners represented a higher proportion of the agriculturally employed than they did in the two other areas. The direction of the changes, however, were much the same. In this area owners declined from 34.5 percent in 1880 and 36.5 percent in 1890 to 21.8 percent in 1930 and 25.8 percent in 1935. Tenants increased from 20.8 percent in 1880 to 30.6 percent in 1900, declined to 26.6 percent in 1910, after which year they increased steadily to 36.0 percent in 1935. Tenants, excluding croppers, were more important in this area than in the other two areas between 1920 and 1930. They were 21.6 percent in 1920 and increased to 28.2 percent by 1935. Croppers were relatively few, for they were only 6.6 percent of all those employed in 1920, 10.1 percent in 1930 and 7.8 percent in 1935. Laborers, including family and hired laborers, were 44.7 percent in 1880 and declined to 36.6 percent in 1900, increased to 50.1 percent in 1910 and declined thereafter to 38.2 percent in 1935. Hired laborers increased from 19.8 percent in 1910 to 24.2 percent in 1920 but declined to 19.0 percent by 1935.

PERCENTAGE IN EACH TENURE CLASS GAINFULLY EMPLOYED IN AGRICULTURE IN COTTON, 1880-1935



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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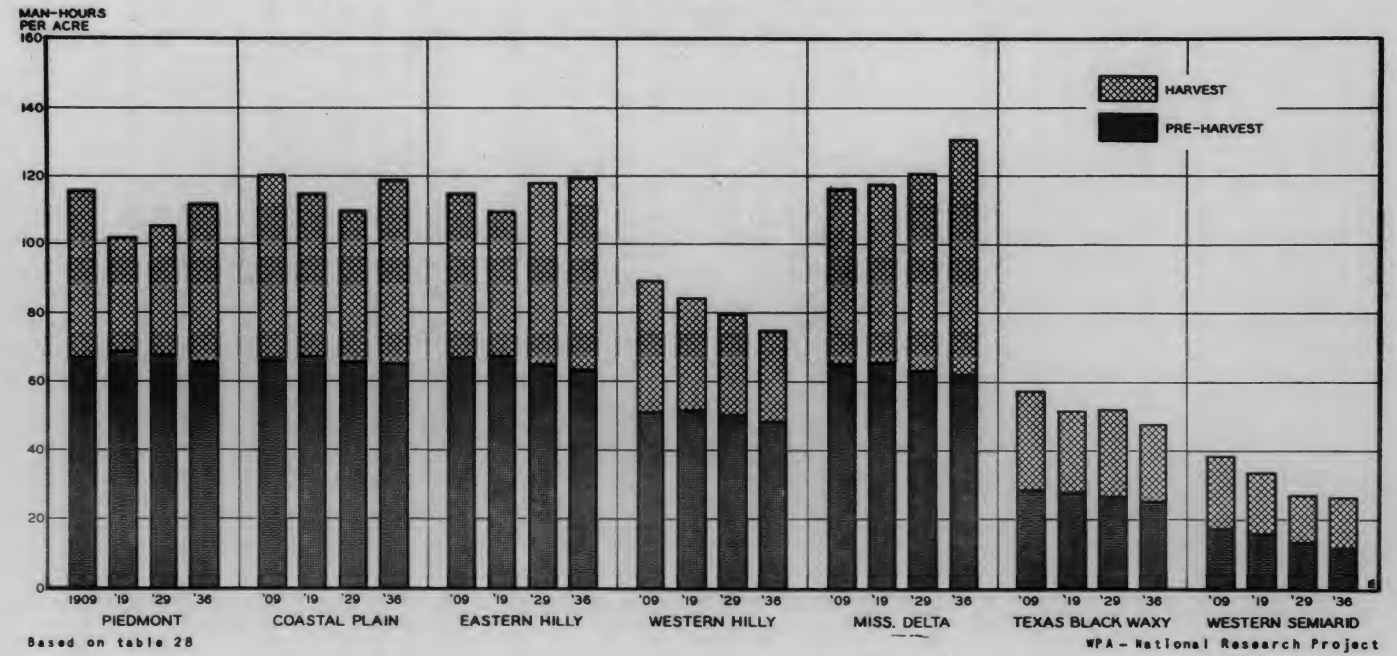
Changes in Labor Requirements in Cotton Production

Figure 4 shows the changes in labor requirements per acre of cotton. The labor requirements, per acre, are greater in the Piedmont, the Coastal Plain, the Eastern Hilly, and the Mississippi Delta areas. They are lower in the Western Hilly, the Texas Black Waxy, and the Western Semi-arid areas. Preharvest requirements are higher in the areas of greatest precipitation, the areas in which the total requirements are higher. Harvest labor requirements follow closely the yield obtained in the various areas. The harvest requirements are greater in the Mississippi Delta area and lowest in the Western Semi-arid areas. One other factor, other than yield, affecting the lower requirements in the Western areas is the practice of "pulling" or "snapping" rather than picking the cotton.

Increased mechanization of cotton production will have the least effects in preharvest operations in the Western areas, for mechanization has already had its greatest effects there. In the future it may be expected, however, that requirements for preharvest operations will decline in the other areas.

Figure 28.- LABOR USED PER ACRE IN PRODUCING COTTON ON FARMS SURVEYED, 1909-36



Based on table 28

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Changes in Tenure Status for Homogeneous Areas

1. Arkansas Bottom Land Area

In a study made by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics in cooperation with the Agricultural Adjustment Administration and the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station in three Bottom Land counties in Arkansas, it was found that definite shifts from sharecropper and share tenant labor toward wage labor had been going on between 1932 and 1938 (Table 4). On the 221 farms surveyed a reduction of 32 share tenants and 177 sharecroppers had occurred while the number of wage families increased by 162 and the number of single wage hands increased by 30. Other renters increased from zero to six. This amounted to a reduction of 13.7 percent of the 1932 number of share laborers (including share renters and sharecroppers) and an increase in the number of wage families of 44.3 percent. Single hands increased 68.2 percent. The net decrease in the number of households, including single hands, amounted to only 0.6 percent.

During the period, the cropland in the 221 farms increased by 8,653 acres, due largely to land clearing operations. For this reason the data were calculated so as to hold the land factor constant and the calculations were made on the basis of the number of families in each tenure class in relation to 10,000 acres of cropland. The calculations on this basis indicated a decline of 27.0 percent of the 1932 number of share renters and sharecroppers, and an increase of 18.8 percent and 43.6 percent of the 1932 number of wage families and single wage hands, respectively. The displacement computed on this basis was 15.9 percent. The changes computed on this basis may be considered as the potential changes in this area for most of the changes from share labor to wage labor occurred on mechanized farms. On the mechanized farms the changes to wage labor were by no means complete, but much of the change was toward the quasi-share labor group, who were classified here as sharecroppers.

2. Arkansas Upland Area

In three counties in the Upland Area of Arkansas included in a study conducted by the same agencies of 121 farms, shifts in tenure status were not in evidence, but rather displacement occurred (Table 5). There was a decrease of 14 percent of the 1932 number of share renters, 12.5 percent of the number of sharecroppers, and 30 percent of the wage families. Single wage hands increased from one to five workers. The net reduction of households, including single wage hands, amounted to 12.5 percent of the 1932 number.

In these counties the increase in the number of acres of cropland amounted to 316 acres on the 121 farms, or an average of about 3 acres per farm. Therefore the correction of the figures for changes in acres of cropland did not make material changes. The decline in the percentages of workers in each classification, in relation to changes in cropland, however, were: 15.4 percent for share renters, 20 percent for sharecroppers, 34.8 percent for wage families, and 15.8 percent for all households, including the single wage hands.

Table 5a shows the changes in the sizes of the farms. In the Bottom Land counties the average farm increased from 1,015 to 1,051 acres. The average cropland figures were 559 acres for 1932 and 660 acres for 1938. The average acreage devoted to cotton declined from 358 acres in 1932 to 249 acres in 1938.

An indication of the extent of land clearing activities is shown in the calculations of acres in farm land per 10,000 acres of cropland. In 1932, for every 10,000 acres of cropland, there were 18,141 acres in farm land; in 1938 there were 15,926 acres in farm land for every 10,000 acres of cropland. In other words, the proportion of land in crops in 1932 was 55.1 percent while in 1938 the proportion was 62.8 percent.

In the Upland counties the change in the average size of the farms averaged only three acres. The cropland figure was 156 acres per farm in 1932 compared with 159 in 1938. Cotton acres declined from 69 to 34 per farm. The proportion of farm land in crops changed an insignificant amount, from 47.0 percent in 1932 to 47.5 percent in 1938.

Table 6 shows the changes in tenure status on 60 Laurens County and 42 Florence County farms in South Carolina between 1933 and 1937, together with changes in the number of cotton and tobacco acres per family of sharecroppers and per farm for wage cotton.

3. Laurens County

In Laurens County the 60 farms averaged 2.0 cropper families, 0.3 wage families, and 0.4 single wage hands in 1933. This meant that on all of the 60 farms there were 120 croppers, 20 wage families, and 26 single wage hands in 1935. By 1936, the numbers were 113 croppers, 21 wage families, and 25 single wage hands; a decrease of 7 cropper families, and one single wage hand, and an increase of one wage family on 60 farms. By 1937, there was a net reduction of sharecroppers of only one, a net increase of wage families of one, and a net decrease of single hands of five. Changes in the number of families in each tenure classification were negligible.

The average acres of cotton per sharecropper family were reduced from 16.1 to 13.3 acres over the 5-year period which was almost the same proportion of cotton allowed sharecroppers on these farms before the A.A.A. program as indicated by the 1933 figure.

4. Florence County

In Florence County, there was a reduction of six sharecropper families and two wage families, and one single wage hand on 42 farms over the same 5-year period. In percentages this meant a reduction of 7.0 percent of the sharecroppers, 26.3 percent of the wage families, and 6.1 percent of the single wage hands. A nominal amount of displacement occurred over the period, but the shift from share labor to wage labor was insignificant.

The change in the acreage devoted to sharecropper cotton and to tobacco was slightly in the favor of the cropper, relatively.

Summary

These two studies in four areas tend to explain why a significant change in cotton acres over a large area was accompanied by relatively slight changes in the number of workers. It appears that the acreage reduction is borne to a slight extent by displaced workers, but to a larger extent by the workers remaining on the farm and by the operator. These studies also indicate that the changes from share to wage labor were occurring on mechanized farms.

A study in the High Plains Cotton Area of Texas by Bonnen and Magee a/ shows that there has been a tendency toward large-scale farming in that area since 1926, but "the shift from horse power to tractor power took place with startling rapidity after 1934." They found that, "by 1937, 78 percent of all cooperating farms were depending on tractor power and that 68 percent were using tractors for all field operations involving machinery with the exception of feed harvest." These changes from one-row horse-drawn equipment are estimated to have the effect of reducing the necessary number of farms required to operate the crop acreage in five principal counties of the area by 42 percent in the case of two-row tractor-drawn equipment, and 67 percent in the case of four-row tractor-drawn equipment.

The effect of this, if carried to its ultimate conclusions, would be the reduction from the 1935 number of some 4,300 farm families in the case of the use of two-row tractor equipment and nearly 7,100 farm families with the use of four-row equipment, in the five counties they include. Furthermore, the hired labor needs would be reduced to seasonal demands at chopping and picking times. The chopping requirements for cotton are only 0.6 days b/ per acre, so that the emphasis of needs for hired labor would fall largely upon cotton picking. The labor needs for this area are for migrant laborers.

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a/ "Some Technological Changes in the High Plains Cotton Area of Texas," by C. A. Bonnen and A. C. Magee. Texas Experiment Station, a study made in cooperation with the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture. An article published in Journal of Farm Economics, August 1938.

b/ See footnote 1, Table 8 for source.

Table 4.- Changes in numbers of families by tenure classifications on 221 cotton farms and changes per 10,000 acres of crop land, in the Bottom Lands Areas of the Mississippi and Arkansas Rivers of Arkansas, 1932-38 1/

Item	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938
Bottom Lands Areas 1/:							
Changes in numbers:							
Share renters	232	225	273	232	229	222	200
Other renters	0	0	0	2	2	2	6
Sharecroppers	1,292	1,216	1,118	1,221	1,140	1,223	1,115
Wage families	366	396	405	398	484	511	528
Wage hands	44	53	55	67	70	74	74
Total	1,934	1,890	1,851	1,920	1,925	2,032	1,923
Changes in numbers per 10,000 acres of crop land:							
Share renters	143.1	135.7	162.0	132.9	127.1	121.4	104.5
Other renters	0	0	0	1.1	1.1	.9	3.2
Sharecroppers	798.1	720.7	650.2	695.4	621.7	659.4	581.2
Wage families	247.2	258.4	252.0	246.0	290.3	298.0	293.6
Wage hands	27.5	31.6	31.5	39.2	39.8	40.6	39.5
Total	1,215.9	1,146.4	1,095.7	1,114.8	1,080.0	1,120.3	1,022.0
Total crop land	48,098	50,194	51,571	52,396	54,076	54,869	56,751

1/ Mississippi, Chicot, and Pulaski Counties. Based on unpublished manuscript. Agricultural Experiment Station, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas. Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture cooperating; by J. G. McNeely and Glen T. Barton.

Table 5.- Changes in numbers of families by tenure classifications on 121 cotton farms and changes per 10,000 acres of crop land, in the Upland Areas of Arkansas, 1932-38 1/

Item	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938
Upland Areas 1/							
Changes in numbers							
Share renters	222	216	221	220	192	192	191
Other renters	0	0	1	8	0	0	1
Sharecroppers	128	128	126	121	119	112	112
Wage families	10	7	6	8	11	11	7
Wage hands	1	1	2	3	2	4	5
Total	361	352	356	360	324	319	316
Changes in numbers per 10,000 acres of crop land							
Share renters	413.0	402.7	416.8	411.0	348.9	350.0	349.3
Other renters	--	--	2.3	16.5	--	--	2.3
Sharecroppers	208.4	207.1	204.2	190.6	180.6	164.2	166.7
Wage families	20.7	14.4	12.3	16.4	22.7	22.3	13.7
Wage hands	2.3	2.3	4.6	6.9	4.7	9.0	10.8
Total	644.4	626.5	640.2	641.4	556.9	545.5	542.8
Total crop land	16,190	16,215	16,217	16,219	16,244	16,457	16,506

1/ Clark, Pope, and Independence Counties.

For source, see Table 4.

Table 5a.- Changes in average size of farms and cotton areas, and changes in relation to 10,000 acres of cropland in bottom lands and upland areas of Arkansas, 1932-38

Item	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938
Bottom land areas							
Average farm:							
Acres in farm	1015	1014	1017	1020	1038	1039	1051
Acres in cropland	559	584	600	609	629	638	660
Acres in cotton	388	288	257	275	316	358	249
Per 10,000 acres of cropland:							
Acres in farm land	18141	17371	16956	16742	16514	16292	15926
Acres in cotton	6943	4942	4281	4520	5029	5613	3779
Upland areas							
Average farm:							
Acres in farm	331	333	333	333	331	334	334
Acres in cropland	156	156	156	156	156	158	159
Acres in cotton	69	48	44	46	45	49	34
Per 10,000 acres of cropland:							
Acres in farm land	21287	21346	21343	21340	21213	21072	21044
Acres in cotton	4452	3087	2833	2944	2852	3066	2145

For source see Table 4.

Table 6.- Changes in labor organization and the proportion of cotton acreage operated by sharecropper and wage labor on identical farms in Laurens and Florence Counties, South Carolina, 1933-37

Item	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937
Laurens County 1/					
Labor organization per farm:					
Cropper families	2.0	1.95	1.93	1.88	1.98
Wage families	.33	.30	.30	.35	.35
Single wage hands	.43	.42	.48	.42	.35
Acreage in cotton per cropper family	16.1	12.6	12.6	13.5	13.8
Acreage in wage cotton per farm 2/	16.8	11.1	11.5	11.0	11.5
Proportion of cotton acreage operated with					
Croppers	70.4	69.3	68.0	68.9	68.5
Wage labor	29.6	30.2	32.0	31.1	31.5
Florence County 3/					
Labor organization per farm:					
Cropper families	2.02	1.88	2.00	2.00	1.88
Wage labor families	.19	.21	.19	.14	.14
Single wage hands	.33	.26	.31	.31	.31
Acreage in cotton per cropper family	6.9	5.6	5.0	5.1	5.6
Acreage in wage cotton per farm 2/	6.1	4.3	3.8	4.0	4.6
Acreage in tobacco per cropper family	3.4	2.8	2.8	3.0	3.1
Acreage in wage tobacco per farm 2/	3.2	2.6	2.3	2.2	2.3
Proportion of cotton acreage operated with					
Cropper families	69.7	70.9	72.5	71.8	70.7
Wage labor	30.3	29.1	27.6	28.2	29.3
Proportion of tobacco acreage operated with					
Cropper families	68.3	67.1	70.9	72.8	72.9
Wage labor	31.7	32.9	29.1	27.2	27.1

1/ Sixty farms showing continuous sharecropper, wage family or single wage hand data for the years for which data pertain.
2/ Includes cotton and tobacco produced by operator, family labor, and hired labor.
3/ Forty-two farms showing continuous sharecropper, wage family or single wage hand data for the years for which data pertain.
Unpublished manuscript of South Carolina Agricultural Experiment Station, Clemson, South Carolina, in cooperation with Bureau of Agricultural Economics and Agricultural Adjustment Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture, by E. J. Holcomb and G. H. Aull.

Economic Explanations of Changes Between Share and Wage Labor

In order that a more complete understanding may be available, an economic explanation of the changes that have been occurring is offered in the next ten tables. In a sense these tables also point the direction that future changes may be expected to take. For this purpose three typical counties were selected in three of the important cotton areas. The first county is Laurens County, South Carolina, which is typical of most of the Piedmont Cotton Area, where mechanization probably has least affected the labor organization. The second county is Mississippi County, Arkansas, which is typical of the Bottom Land cotton areas of the Mississippi River, where mechanization is increasing, and where the labor organization of farms is experiencing changes. The third county is Lamb County, Texas, which is typical of the Texas High Plains Cotton Area, in which area mechanization in cotton farming with its effects on labor organization is farther advanced.

Table 8 shows the factors considered in this analysis, and the approximate comparative advantage which each area had over the others in each respect in 1939. All of the factors are not affected by mechanization. The labor requirements are affected by mechanization, and this one factor has the greatest bearing upon the choice between types of labor. The preharvest requirements are more important than the total requirements, for prior to the harvest period the chance elements of weather, which affects yields, and price are greatest.

This table shows that in the Texas Plains the preharvest labor is less than one-fifth of that required for the two other areas, and between one-fourth and one-fifth of the total labor required per acre. The cotton yields are lowest in the Plains but no fertilizer is used there compared with about 75 pounds per acre in the Arkansas County and about 525 pounds per acre in the Piedmont County. In the other respects the Plains Area is at the greatest disadvantage, for ginning costs and wage rates are higher and prices of cotton seed and lint are lower compared with the other two areas.

Tables 9, 10, and 11 show the comparison between the areas under the two labor conditions for the average cotton acre in each of the counties under conditions approximating those for 1939. In Laurens County (Table 9) under a wage system the operator would be required to invest nearly $17 per acre for labor, fertilizer, and ginning costs compared with $4.12 under a sharecropper system. Of this amount, $11.94 under a wage system, compared with $3.33 under a sharecropper system, would be invested before harvest time arrives, with there still remaining a chance that the yield or the price of cotton might not come up to expectations. If he obtained the average yield of the county for the period 1933-37 and the average price for cotton during the period 1933-36, his net returns over the variable expenses would have been $9.78 under a sharecropper system as compared with $10.86 under a wage system. Thus, the wage system would have been more advantageous, by the margin of $1.08 per acre. In 1939, the average operator would have received 3.4 cents per pound in A.A.A. payments under a wage system, or 1.7 cents per pound under a sharecropper system. The difference between the two systems would have been $5.55 per acre, after including these payments. The purpose of the A.A.A. payments and, naturally, the effect here was to increase the

effective price received for cotton. Had the price of cotton, without the A.A.A. payments, been 12.4 cents per pound, the same difference would have existed.

Similar differences for Mississippi County, Arkansas, are shown in Table 10. In this county the per acre preharvest variable costs would approximate $7.40 under a wage system as compared with 60 cents under a cropper system. The total variable cost, per acre, would be $24.20 under a wage system compared with $2.82 under a sharecropper system. The average operator's net cash returns over variable expenses under the two systems would favor the wage system by approximately $2.31, with cotton worth 10 cents per pound and seed worth $20 per ton. After including A.A.A. payments, the difference would be $8.93 per acre.

In Lamb County, Texas, the average operator's preharvest variable costs per acre under a wage system would approximate $1.50 as compared with no costs under a sharecropper system. The total variable cash expenses would be about $7.22 under a wage system as compared with $1.28 under a sharecropper system. The per acre net cash returns over variable expenses would favor the wage system by $4.80. Including A.A.A. payments, the difference would favor the wage system by $8.42 per acre.

Tables 9a, 10a, and 11a show similar comparisons for approximate conditions for the period 1910-14. It will be observed that in the Piedmont and Delta Areas the sharecropper system was the more advantageous, while in the Texas Plains the wage system was the more advantageous, but by a very small margin. The comparative advantage favored the sharecropper system in the Piedmont by $2.60, and in the Delta by $1.57, but in the Texas Plains the wage system was the more advantageous by 52 cents.

Tables 12, 13, and 14 show the cash returns over variable expenses to the operator per acre of cotton under three conditions of price, yield, and wage rates for the sharecropper and wage labor systems in the three important areas.

In each of the areas it appears that at given wage rates it becomes increasingly more advantageous to use wage labor as the price or the yield is increased. Farms with higher yields, then, may make the shift from share to wage labor more easily. Any lowering of labor requirements tends also to make for shifts toward wage labor.

As the farms become mechanized to the limits of existing possibilities throughout the Cotton Belt, the tendencies will first be toward the quasi-share labor system. Any mechanization of other operations, such as hoeing and chopping, or the cotton harvest, the tendencies will be toward seasonal labor. Accompanying the increase of mechanization in either event will be tendencies toward larger holdings and increased migration of workers.

Table 8.- Comparison of advantage of three selected areas by factors affecting choice of wage or cropper labor

Factors		Areas		
		Piedmont (Laurens Co., S.C.)	Delta (Mississippi Co., Ark.)	Texas Plains (Lamb Co., Texas)
1. Labor requirements 1/				
(a) Preharvest	days	6.6	6.2	1.2
Hoeing and chopping	do.	2.4	3.4	0.6
Other	do.	4.2	2.8	0.6
(b) Harvest, per cwt., lint	do.	2.2	2.3	0.9
Per acre (normal yield)	do.	5.8	8.9	1.9
(c) Total, per acre, normal yield	do.	12.4	15.1	3.1
2. Normal yield 2/				
(a) Lint	lbs.	263	389	213
(b) Seed	do.	421	848	362
3. Fertilization, per acre 3/				
(a) Mixed	do.	425	--	--
(b) Nitrates	do.	100	75	--
4. Ginning, bagging, and tie costs 4/				
(a) Per bale	dol.	3.00	5.70	6.00
(b) Per acre, normal yield	do.	1.58	4.43	2.56
5. Wage rates, per day, without board 4/	do.	0.80	1.00	1.25
6. Prices received 3/				
(a) Cotton lint, per pound	do.	0.09	0.10	0.085
(b) Cotton seed, per ton	do.	19.60	20.00	18.60

1/ Labor requirements data from Works Progress Administration, National Research Project Report A-7, "Changes in Technology and Labor Requirements in Crop Production, Cotton," by W. C. Holley and Lloyd E. Arnold.

2/ Normal yields are five year averages as obtained from A.A.A., U.S.D.A., for the years 1933-37.

3/ Fertilization rates and prices for cotton lint and seed approximate those for the areas during the year 1937 as indicated by unpublished data in the files of the Division of Farm Population and Rural Welfare, B.A.E., U.S.D.A.

4/ Prices paid for ginning, bagging, and ties, and wages, per day, without board from "Agricultural Statistics."

Table 9.- Relative advantage to farm operator of using sharecroppers and wage laborers in producing an acre of cotton under two situations, Laurens County, Piedmont area, South Carolina 1/

Item	Sharecropper System	Wage Labor System
	Dollars	Dollars
Operator's gross cash returns from cotton:		
Lint (263 lbs. @ 9 cents)	11.83	23.67
Seed (421 lbs. @ $19.60/ton)	2.07	4.13
Total	13.90	27.80
Operator's cash expenses variable with two systems:		
Preharvest wage labor (6.6 days @ 80 cents)		5.28
Pick wage cotton (684 lb. @ 50 cents/100 lb.)		3.42
Fertilizer (525 lb. @ $25.37/ton)	3.33	6.66
Ginning, bag and ties ($3.00/500 lb. bale)	.79	1.58
Total	4.12	16.94
Operator's cash returns over variable expenses:		
Excluding A.A.A. payments	9.78	10.86
Including A.A.A. payments, with rates and division as in 1939 2/	14.25	19.80

1/ Data based on usual amounts of labor and other items used in producing cotton in the area and on normal yields as indicated in A.A.A. records. Prices used include 9 cents per pound for lint cotton and $19.60 per ton for cotton seed, with prices of other items at levels approximating those in the area during the 4-year period 1933-36.

2/ A.A.A. payment of 3.4 cents per pound of lint cotton, normal yield. The A.A.A. payments made in respect to sharecropper cotton are divided equally between the sharecropper and operator, reflecting the proportionate crop shares received by each of the two parties. All of the A.A.A. payments made in respect to wage cotton accrue to the operator.

Labor requirements data from Works Progress Administration, National Research Project Report No. A-7, "Changes in Technology and Labor Requirements in Crop Production, Cotton," by W. C. Holley and Lloyd E. Arnold. Average wage rates, and ginning, bagging, and tie costs from Agricultural Statistics. Other data from the files of the Division of Farm Population and Rural Welfare, adapted from unpublished manuscript.

Table 9a.- Relative advantage to farm operator of using sharecroppers and wage laborers in producing an acre of cotton, Eastern Cotton Area, 1909 1/

Item	Sharecropper system	Wage labor system
	Dollars	Dollars
Operator's gross cash returns from cotton:		
Lint (210 lbs. @ 11 cents)	11.55	23.10
Seed (336 lbs. @ $20/ton)	1.68	3.36
Total	13.23	26.46
Operator's variable cash expenses:		
Preharvest wage labor (6.7 days @ 97 cents)		6.50
Pick wage cotton (546 lbs. @ $1 cwt.)		5.46
Fertilizer - commercial - per acre	3.24	6.48
Ginning, bagging and ties ($2.97/500 lb. bale)	0.62	1.25
Total	3.86	19.69
Operator's net cash returns	9.37	6.77

1/ Labor requirements and yield from Works Progress Administration, National Research Project Report No. A-7, "Changes in Technology and Labor Requirements in Crop Production, Cotton," by W. C. Holley and Lloyd E. Arnold. Average wage rates, ginning, bagging, and tie costs from Agricultural Statistics. Other data from the files of the Division of Farm Population and Rural Welfare, adapted from unpublished manuscript.

Table 10.— Relative advantage to farm operator of using sharecroppers and wage laborers in producing an acre of cotton under two situations, Mississippi County, Arkansas 1/

Item	Sharecropper System	Wage Labor System
	Dollars	Dollars
Operator's gross cash returns from cotton:		
Lint (389 lbs. @ 10 cents)	19.45	38.90
Seed (848 lbs. @ $20.00/ton)	4.24	8.48
Total	23.69	47.38
Operator's cash expenses variable with two systems:		
Preharvest wage labor (6.2 days @ $1.00)		6.20
Pick wage cotton (1,237 lbs. @ $1.00/100 lbs.)		12.37
Fertilizer (75 lbs. nitrogenous fertilizer @ $32.00 per ton)	0.60	1.20
Ginning, bagging, and ties ($5.70/500 lb. bale)	2.22	4.43
Total	2.82	24.20
Operator's cash returns over variable expenses:		
Excluding A.A.A. payments	20.87	23.18
Including A.A.A. payments with rates and division as in 1939 2/	27.48	36.41

1/ Data based on usual amounts of labor and other items used in producing cotton in the area and on normal yields as indicated in A.A.A. records. Prices used include 10 cents per pound for lint cotton and $20.00 per ton for cotton seed, with prices of other items at levels approximating those in the area during the 4-year period 1933-36.

2/ A.A.A. payment of 3.4 cents per pound of lint cotton, normal yield. The A.A.A. payments made in respect to sharecropper cotton are divided equally between the sharecropper and operator, reflecting the proportionate crop shares received by each of the two parties. All of the A.A.A. payments made in respect to wage cotton accrue to the operator.

Labor requirements data from Works Progress Administration, National Research Project Report No. A-7, "Changes in Technology and Labor Requirements in Crop Production, Cotton," by W. C. Holley and Lloyd E. Arnold. Average wage rates, and ginning, bagging, and tie costs from Agricultural Statistics. Other data from the files of the Division of Farm Population and Rural Welfare, adapted from unpublished manuscript.

Table 10a.- Relative advantage to farm operator of using sharecroppers and wage laborers in producing an acre of cotton, Delta Cotton Area, 1909 1/

Item	Sharecropper system	Wage labor system
	Dollars	Dollars
Operator's gross cash returns from cotton:		
Lint (224 lbs. @ 11 cents)	12.32	24.64
Seed (499 lbs. @ $20/ton)	2.50	4.99
Total	14.82	29.63
Operator's variable cash expenses:		
Preharvest (6.5 days @ $1.09)		7.10
Pick wage cotton (723 lbs. @ $1.10 cwt.)		7.95
Fertilizer - commercial - per acre	0.58	1.15
Ginning, bagging and ties ($3.39/500 lb. bale)	.76	1.52
Total	1.34	17.72
Operator's net cash returns	13.48	11.91

1/ See Table 9a.

Table 11.- Relative advantage to farm operator of using sharecroppers and wage laborers in producing an acre of cotton under two situations, Lamb County, Texas High Plains Area, Texas 1/

Item	Sharecropper system	Wage labor system
	Dollars	Dollars
Operator's gross cash returns from cotton:		
Lint (213 lbs. @ 8.5 cents)	9.05	18.11
Seed (362 lbs. @ $18.60 per ton)	1.69	3.37
Total	10.74	21.48
Operator's cash expenses variable with two systems:		
Preharvest wage labor (1.2 days @ $1.25)		1.50
Pick wage cotton (575 lbs. @ 55 cents/100 lbs.)		3.16
Ginning, bagging and ties ($6.00/500 lb. bale)	1.28	2.56
Total	1.28	7.22
Operator's cash returns over variable expenses:		
Excluding A.A.A. payments	9.46	14.26
Including A.A.A. payments, with rates and division as in 1939 2/	13.08	21.50

1/ Data based on usual amounts of labor and other items used in producing cotton in the area and on normal yields as indicated in A.A.A. records. Prices used include 8.5 cents per pound for lint cotton and $18.60 per ton for cotton seed, with prices of other items at levels approximating those in the area during the 4-year period 1933-36.

2/ A.A.A. payment of 3.4 cents per pound of lint cotton, normal yield. The A.A.A. payments made in respect to sharecropper cotton are divided equally between the sharecropper and operator, reflecting the proportionate crop shares received by each of the two parties. All of the A.A.A. payments made in respect to wage cotton accrue to the operator.

Labor requirements data from Works Progress Administration, National Research Project Report No. A-7, "Changes in Technology and Labor Requirements in Crop Production, Cotton," by W. C. Holley and Lloyd E. Arnold. Average wage rates, and ginning, bagging, and tie costs from Agricultural Statistics. Other data from the files of the Division of Farm Population and Rural Welfare, adapted from unpublished manuscript.

Table 11a.- Relative advantage to farm operator of using sharecroppers and wage laborers in producing an acre of cotton, Western Cotton Area, 1909 1/

Item	Sharecropper system	Wage labor system
	Dollars	Dollars
Operator's gross cash returns from cotton:		
Lint (127 lbs. @ 11 cents)	6.98	13.97
Seed (203 lbs. @ $20/ton)	1.02	2.03
Total	8.00	16.00
Operator's variable cash expenses:		
Preharvest (1.7 days @ $1.39)		2.36
Pick wage cotton (330 lbs. @ $1.40 cwt.)		4.62
Ginning, bagging and ties ($3.93/500 lb. bale)	0.50	1.00
Total	0.50	7.98
Operator's net cash returns	7.50	8.02

1/ See Table 9a.

Table 12.- Comparison of cash returns over variable expenses to farm operator per acre in cotton operated with sharecropper and wage labor, with varying prices of cotton and cotton seed, varying wage rates, and specified cotton yields per acre for Laurens County, South Carolina

Price	Yield	Labor System	Wage rates 1/ 0.50	1.00	1.50
Lint 6 cents lb. Seed $15.00 ton	200	Cropper	3.27	3.27	3.27
		Wage	0.63	-5.27	-9.67
	263	Cropper	5.35	5.35	5.35
		Wage	3.97	-2.75	-8.87
	325	Cropper	8.39	8.39	8.39
		Wage	7.26	0.27	-7.18
Lint 9 cents lb. Seed $20.00 ton	200	Cropper	6.67	6.67	6.67
		Wage	7.43	1.53	-2.87
	263	Cropper	9.82	9.82	9.82
		Wage	12.91	6.19	-0.07
	325	Cropper	12.91	12.91	12.91
		Wage	18.31	10.78	3.37
Lint 12 cents lb. Seed $25.00 ton	200	Cropper	10.07	10.07	10.07
		Wage	14.23	8.33	3.93
	263	Cropper	14.29	14.29	14.29
		Wage	21.85	15.13	9.01
	325	Cropper	18.44	18.44	18.44
		Wage	29.36	21.83	14.92

1/ 0.50 wage rate means 0.50 per day and 0.50 cwt. seed cotton; $1.00 wage rate means $1.00 per day and $1.00 cwt. seed cotton; $1.50 wage rate means $1.50 per day and $1.50 cwt. seed cotton. Commercially mixed fertilizer used at $24.00 per ton rate. Nitrogenous fertilizer used at $32.00 per ton rate. See Table 8 for amounts used.

Adapted from Unpublished manuscript of South Carolina Agricultural Experiment Station, "Sharecroppers and Wage Laborers on Selected Farms in Two South Carolina, Counties," E. J. Holcomb and G. H. Aull.

Table 13.- Comparison of cash returns over variable expenses to farm operator per acre in cotton operated with sharecropper and wage labor, with varying prices of cotton and cotton seed, varying wage rates, and specified cotton yields per acre for Mississippi County, Arkansas

Price	Yield	Labor system	Wage rates 1/ 0.50	1.00	1.50
Lint 6 cents lb. Seed $15.00 ton	300	Cropper	9.17	9.17	9.17
		Wage	10.43	2.53	-5.37
	389	Cropper	12.03	12.03	12.03
		Wage	14.79	5.50	-3.79
	450	Cropper	14.05	14.05	14.05
		Wage	17.79	7.49	-2.81
Lint 9 cents lb. Seed $20.00 ton	300	Cropper	14.49	14.49	14.49
		Wage	21.08	13.18	5.28
	389	Cropper	18.92	18.92	18.92
		Wage	28.58	19.29	10.00
	450	Cropper	22.04	22.04	22.04
		Wage	33.77	23.47	13.17
Lint 12 cents lb. Seed $25.00 ton	300	Cropper	19.81	19.81	19.81
		Wage	31.73	23.83	15.93
	389	Cropper	25.82	25.82	25.82
		Wage	42.37	33.08	23.79
	450	Cropper	30.03	30.03	30.03
		Wage	49.75	39.45	29.15

1/ 0.50 wage rate means 0.50 per day and 0.50 cwt. seed cotton; $1.00 wage rate means $1.00 per day a nd $1.00 cwt. seed cotton; $1.50 wage rate means $1.50 per day and $1.50 cwt. seed cotton. Nitrogenous fertilizer used at $32 per ton rate. See Table 8 for amounts used.

Adapted from unpublished manuscript of South Carolina Agricultural Experiment Station, "Sharecroppers and Wage Laborers on Selected Farms in Two South Carolina Counties," E. J. Holcomb and G. H. Aull.

Table 14.- Comparison of cash returns over variable expenses to farm operator per acre in cotton operated with sharecropper and wage labor, with varying prices of cotton and cotton seed, varying wage rates, and specified cotton yields per acre for Lamb County, Texas

Price	Yield	Labor system	Wage rates 1/ 0.50	1.00	1.50
Lint 6 cents lb. Seed $15.00 ton	175	Cropper	5.32	5.32	5.32
		Wage	7.68	4.71	1.75
	213	Cropper	6.47	6.47	6.47
		Wage	9.46	5.89	2.50
	275	Cropper	8.35	8.35	8.35
		Wage	12.39	8.08	3.76
Lint 9 cents lb. Seed $20.00 ton	175	Cropper	8.31	8.31	8.31
		Wage	13.67	10.70	7.74
	213	Cropper	9.12	9.12	9.12
		Wage	16.75	13.17	9.79
	275	Cropper	13.07	13.07	13.07
		Wage	21.81	17.50	13.18
Lint 12 cents lb. Seed $25.00 ton	175	Cropper	11.31	11.31	11.31
		Wage	19.66	16.69	13.73
	213	Cropper	13.71	13.71	13.71
		Wage	23.94	20.36	16.98
	275	Cropper	17.77	17.77	17.77
		Wage	31.23	26.92	22.60

1/ 0.50 wage rate means 0.50 per day and 0.50 cwt. seed cotton; $1.00 wage rate means $1.00 per day and $1.00 cwt. seed cotton; $1.50 wage rate means $1.50 per day and $1.50 cwt. seed cotton. No fertilizer used.

Adapted from unpublished manuscript of South Carolina Agricultural Experiment Station, "Sharecroppers and Wage Laborers on Selected Farms in Two South Carolina Counties," E. J. Holcomb and G. H. Aull.

Trends in Economic Status

Trends in economic status as computed from sharecropper estimated amounts of cash settlements and amounts of advances and debt at settlement time, and from wage laborer family estimates of cash earnings, are available only from the same South Carolina and Arkansas studies. 1/ In each of these studies it is apparent that the sharecropper economic status has improved materially since 1933 (Tables 15 and 16). From the South Carolina study it is also apparent that the economic status of the wage laborer family improved during the same period (Table 15).

Sharecroppers in the two South Carolina Counties obtained their greatest amount of cash settlements in 1937. The settlement amount in that year amounted to $80 in Laurens County and $135 in Florence County. In the three Arkansas Counties the greatest amount of cash settlement occurred in 1936 when the average cropper secured $101.06. These are probably the greatest amounts of money these people have had at one time since 1929, judging from the prices farmers have received for cotton over the period.

It is interesting to note, also, that each year about three-fourths of the sharecroppers' cash income from their labor was "lived-up", largely during the usual six months "furnish" period, March 1 to September 1. Between September 1 and the settlement date (about November 15) these families live on "seed money". "Seed money" is the amount obtained from the sale of the cropper's share of the cotton seed. The seed is usually sold to the cotton gin and the cost for ginning the cotton deducted from the value of the seed.

The cash settlement must be used to buy clothing, food, and other necessities during the winter months. It must last until March 1 of the following year when the "furnish begins". From this it is easy to see the difficulty these individuals have in "climbing the agricultural ladder".

The picture for wage laborer families has been no better. In fact, as it has been mentioned in an earlier testimony, their income from home use goods and perquisites was much less; therefore, more of the cash income must be spent for food and less for clothing, health and other purposes, and less may be saved for the purpose of buying equipment.

1/ See Table 6 for South Carolina and Table 18 for Arkansas for sources.

Table 15.- Trend in sharecropper estimated amounts of cash settlements, and amounts of advances and owed at settlement time; and trends in wage family estimated cash earnings; Laurens and Florence Counties, South Carolina, 1937

Item	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937
	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars
Sharecroppers					
Laurens County, S. C.					
Cash settlements	40	32	46	80	71
Advances and owed at settlement	201	194	191	197	214
Florence County, S. C.					
Cash settlements	98	130	95	135	116
Advances and owed at settlement	137	149	168	183	213
Wage family					
Laurens County, S. C.	220	217	230	234	250
Florence County, S. C.	210	240	248	268	258

For source, see Table 6.

Table 16.- Trend in sharecropper estimated amounts of cash settlements and amounts of advances owed at settlement time, Jefferson, Miller, and Phillips Counties, Arkansas, 1937 1/

Year	Cash settlement 2/	Advances 3/
Number of cases	93	87
	Dollars	Dollars
1932	35.83	111.06
1933	60.91	118.61
1934	75.79	118.77
1935	62.54	125.45
1936	101.06	140.84
1937	67.68	161.56

1/ Data for families in groups B, C, and D who had a share crop during the entire period, 1932-37.

2/ The amount of cash turned over to the sharecropper at the end of the year after total advances and interest on the account have been deducted.

3/ Includes credit extended for groceries, clothes, other living expenses, certain farm expenses, and interest on the account. For source, see Table 18.

Changes in Tenure Status

Table 17 shows the previous tenure status of heads of sharecropper and wage families in Laurens and Florence Counties for the period 1930-37. During this period none of the croppers had been owners, only one in 70 in Laurens County and nine in 79 in Florence County had even been renters. More than two-thirds had been sharecroppers during the entire period. As many as 20 percent of the Laurens County croppers had been wage families, and as many as 13.9 percent of the Florence County sharecroppers had been wage families (1932). A few had been working in non-farming occupations.

The wage families had not been owners or renters during the period, and only 13.6 percent in Florence County and 22.6 percent in Laurens County had been sharecroppers. Nineteen and four-tenths of those in Laurens County and 11.4 percent of those in Florence County had worked in other occupations and as many as 19.4 percent in Laurens County, and 27.3 percent in Florence County obtained their first jobs during the period.

In the three Arkansas Bottom Land Counties (Table 18) virtually the same story is told. Only 6 of the 355 had been owners, and 44 had been renters and a few more had worked at other occupations, but two-thirds had been share laborers or wage laborers throughout the period.

Figures 5 and 6 show these changes in tenure status as they have affected individual workers. Typical cases were carefully selected from a larger sample by the age of the various family heads. The charts show the age and the tenure status which each individual had when he began working, the various changes in status which followed, and the present age and status of the individual. Each bar is a life history of one family as it attained higher status and/or lost status. There is roughly indicated a tendency for the family to attain the highest tenure status between the ages of 35 and 50, after which the status of the family tends to decline. The older family heads attained a higher tenure status earlier in life than the younger family heads. This is probably indicative of declining opportunities. As mechanization continues to increase the amount of capital necessary for these individuals to attain higher status and to reduce the amount they can earn with their labor, it is likely that there will be fewer and fewer who will rise above the laborer classifications.

Table 17.- Previous tenure status of heads of sharecropper and wage families of Laurens and Florence Counties, South Carolina, 1937

Item	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937
	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.
Sharecroppers 1/								
Laurens County								
Sharecroppers	75.7	71.4	67.1	74.3	77.1	84.3	91.4	100.0
Wage laborers	8.6	17.1	20.0	15.7	15.7	14.3	7.2	0
Renters	0	0	1.4	1.4	0	0	0	0
Others	15.7	11.5	11.5	8.6	7.2	1.4	1.4	0
Florence County								
Sharecroppers	67.1	70.9	70.9	75.9	75.9	81.2	93.8	100.0
Wage laborers	10.1	11.4	13.9	8.9	11.4	7.5	2.5	0
Renters	6.3	6.3	10.1	11.4	10.2	8.8	2.5	0
Others	16.5	11.4	5.1	3.8	2.5	2.5	1.2	0
Wage families 2/								
Laurens County								
Wage laborers	38.6	45.2	58.1	58.1	58.1	71.0	83.9	100.0
Sharecroppers	22.6	22.6	12.9	16.1	19.4	19.4	9.7	0
Renters	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Others	19.4	12.8	12.9	9.7	9.7	6.4	6.4	0
Not working	19.4	19.4	16.1	16.1	12.8	3.2	0	0
Florence County								
Wage laborers	61.4	63.6	61.4	75.0	79.6	93.2	95.5	100.0
Sharecroppers	6.8	9.1	13.6	11.4	6.8	0	0	0
Renters	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Others	4.5	6.8	11.4	6.8	9.1	4.5	4.5	0
Not working	27.3	20.5	13.6	6.8	4.5	2.3	0	0

1/ Seventy families in Laurens County and 79 families in Florence County.
2/ Thirty-one families in Laurens County and 44 families in Florence County.
For source, see Table 6.

Table 18.- Tenure experience of family heads, by sharecropper-wage family groups, 1930-37, Miller, Jefferson, and Phillips Counties, Arkansas, 1937

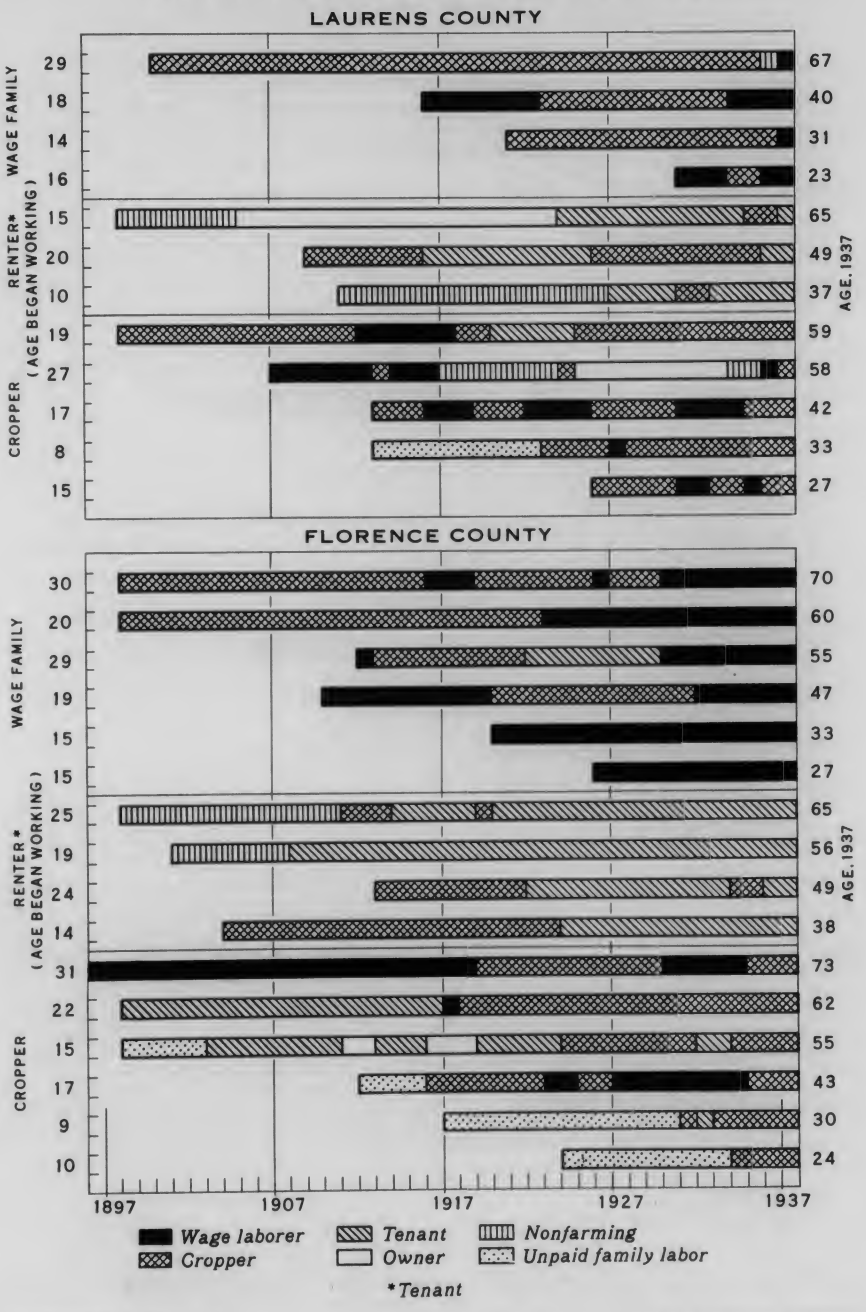
Group and tenure classification	Percentage of workers in each classification, by years							
	1937	1936	1935	1934	1933	1932	1931	1930
Group A								
Wage laborer	100.0	85.4	74.0	62.3	55.7	50.6	37.2	27.0
Sharecropper	0	9.4	19.8	26.9	33.0	29.9	41.0	44.6
Renter 1/	0	0	0	3.3	3.4	5.7	6.4	6.8
Owner	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	5.2	6.2	7.5	7.9	13.8	15.4	21.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number working 2/	96	96	96	93	88	87	78	74
Group B								
Wage laborer	64.6	57.1	47.6	40.3	36.7	34.5	27.3	20.8
Sharecropper	35.4	38.1	42.9	40.3	45.0	43.1	43.6	50.9
Renter 1/	0	4.8	4.8	6.5	8.3	8.6	9.1	9.4
Owner	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.9
Other	0	0	4.7	12.9	10.0	13.8	20.0	17.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number working 2/	65	63	63	62	60	58	55	53
Group C								
Wage laborer	12.7	24.2	16.3	12.5	16.3	14.9	13.1	11.4
Sharecropper	87.3	71.7	73.5	68.8	67.3	63.2	58.3	54.5
Renter 1/	0	4.1	6.1	8.3	7.6	10.4	13.1	12.6
Owner	0	0	1.0	3.1	3.3	2.3	2.4	2.5
Other	0	0	3.1	7.3	5.5	9.2	13.1	19.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number working 2/	102	99	98	96	92	87	84	79
Group D								
Wage laborer	2.2	3.3	4.4	6.7	4.6	6.8	4.7	6.2
Sharecropper	97.8	95.6	88.9	83.3	81.8	73.9	69.4	63.0
Renter 1/	0	1.1	5.6	5.6	8.0	8.0	14.1	13.5
Owner	0	0	0	0	1.1	1.1	1.2	2.5
Other	0	0	1.1	4.4	4.5	10.2	10.6	14.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number working 2/	92	91	90	90	88	88	85	81

1/ Includes share renters, cash renters, and standing renters. The majority, however, were share renters.

2/ Workers indicating that they were "on their own", or working for themselves. The data include tenure experience of the workers after they left home.

"Recent Changes in Farm Labor Organization in Three Arkansas Plantation Counties," by Glen T. Barton and J. G. McNeely. Agricultural Experiment Station, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas, September, 1939. B.A.E. and A.A.A., U. S. Department of Agriculture, cooperating.

TENURE HISTORY OF SELECTED INDIVIDUALS, LAURENS AND FLORENCE COUNTIES, SOUTH CAROLINA



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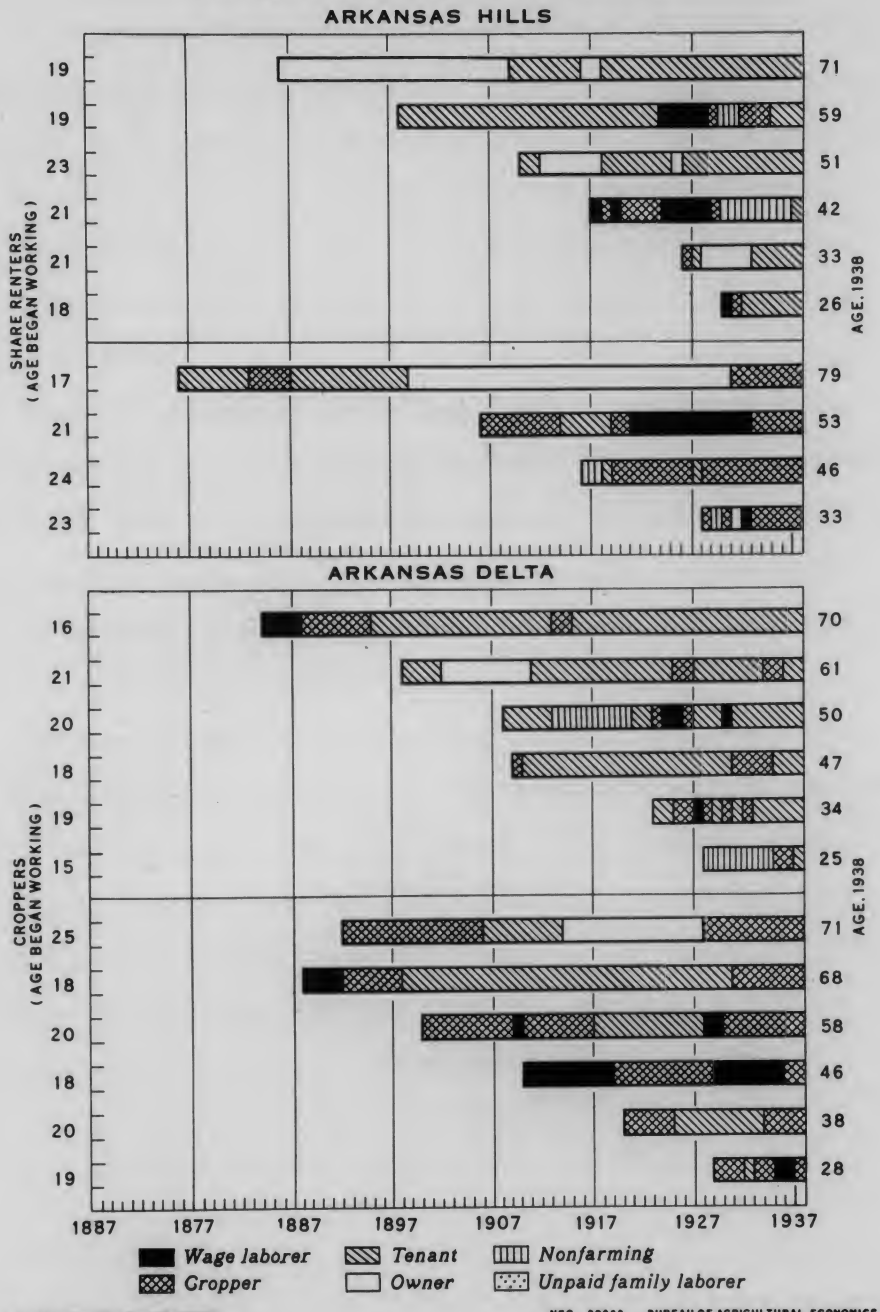
TENURE HISTORY OF SELECTED INDIVIDUALS, ARKANSAS HILLS AND DELTA



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Number of Moves Sharecroppers and Wage Laborers Make

In Laurens and Florence Counties, South Carolina, sharecroppers and wage laborers moved from one farm to another at the rate of between 2.5 and 3.0 times in each 10-year period (Table 19). This is an average of no more than 3 or 4 years residence per farm. Many families move more frequently and some few have lived on the same farm all of their lives. Frequently they move back to the same farms two or more times during their lives.

In the three Arkansas Bottom Land Counties, studied in 1937, nearly 40 percent of the sharecropper and wage families were residing on their 1937 farms for the first year, and 59.1 percent had lived there for two years or less. More than 75 percent had lived on the farms of their 1937 residence four years or less. The average for the 355 cases was less than two years residence on their 1937 farms.

Mobility of families tends to breed instability into the lives of their children and retardation in educational attainment is associated with it. Moreover, there are social losses in the continual severance of the family from community ties, and a decay of social institutions. These social losses result in economic losses to individuals and to communities and the costs of moving about are additional individual losses which in their aggregate become losses to society, also.

Table 19.- Number of moves 1/ sharecroppers and wage families made during past ten years, Laurens and Florence Counties, South Carolina, 1937

Item	Laurens County			Florence County		
	Number of families	Number showing 10 or more years tenure history	Average number of moves made	Number of families	Number showing 10 or more years tenure history	Average number of moves made
Wage families	31	17	2.47	33	21	2.76
Sharecroppers	70	56	2.95	79	64	2.89

1/ A move was considered to be a change between farms of different management, and does not include moves between houses on farms of the same management. For this reason, these data cannot be directly compared with the census.
For source, see Table 6.

Table 20.- Percentage of wage labor-sharecropper groups occupying farms 1/ for an average of specified number of years; Miller, Jefferson, and Phillips Counties, Arkansas, 1937

Occupancy	Wage labor-sharecropper groups				
	A	B	C	D	Total or average
Years	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
1	38.8	38.0	43.4	38.7	39.9
2	19.3	22.4	17.5	18.7	19.2
3	12.6	11.0	9.7	9.1	10.6
4	6.9	7.2	5.8	8.3	7.0
5 - 9	13.4	14.1	13.7	18.4	15.0
10 - 14	5.1	5.0	5.6	2.9	4.6
15 and over	3.9	2.3	4.3	3.9	3.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

1/ A move was considered to be a change between farms of different management, and does not include moves between houses on farms of the same management. For this reason, these data cannot be directly compared with the census. The data include all farm occupancies in the entire tenure experience of the families.

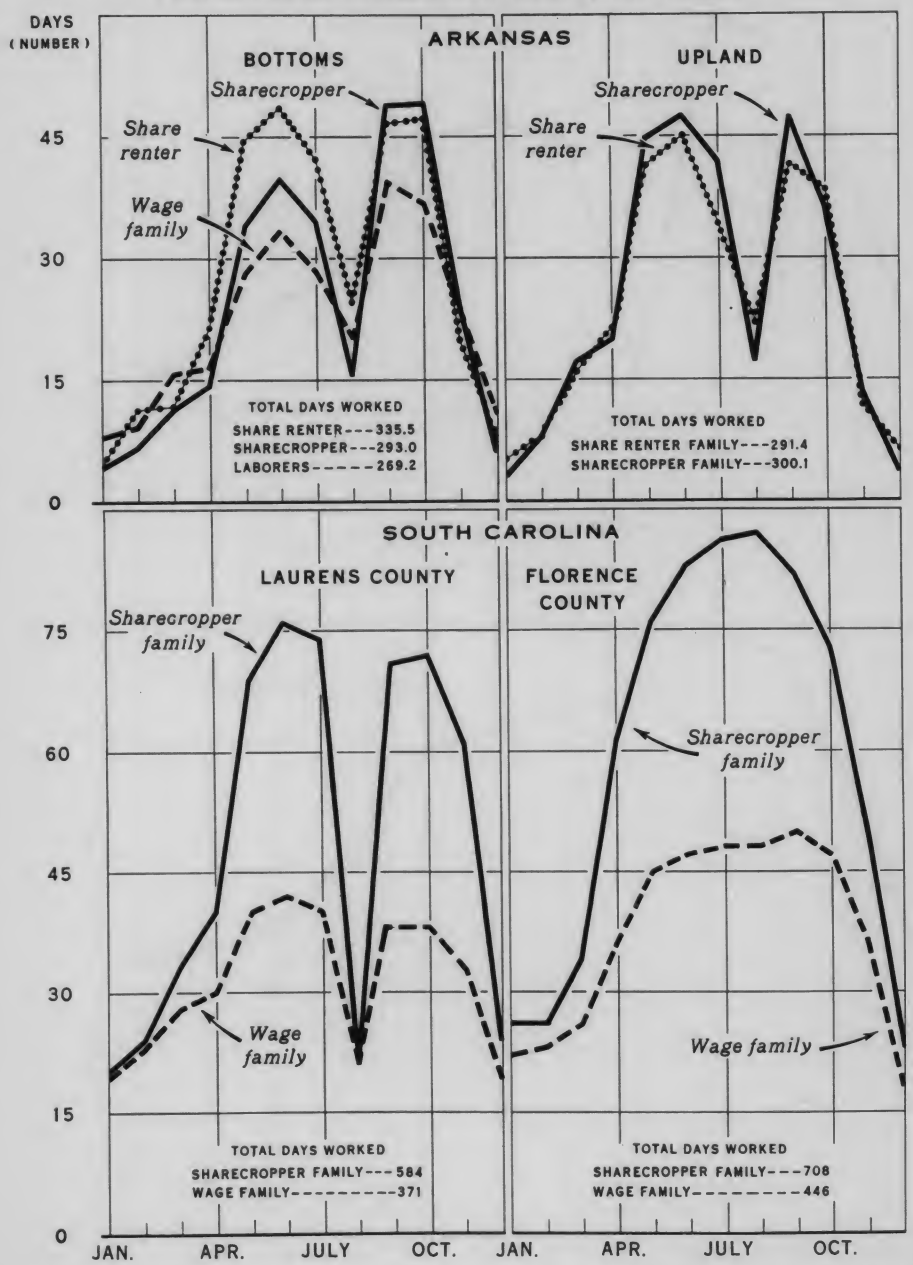
For source, see Table 16.

Seasonal Distribution of Employment and Earnings

In an earlier testimony it was mentioned that earnings of sharecroppers and wage laborers were affected by the seasonal distribution of labor. Charts were presented showing sharp seasonal swings of employment of family and hired workers. It seems timely, in this connection, that this should be included here to complete the picture as it is related to sharecroppers and wage laborers. Figures 7 and 8 are therefore included to show the seasonal distribution of days worked for sharecropper and wage laborer families in four areas, and to show its effects on earnings of wage laborer families in two of the areas.

Mechanization in the Bottom Land Areas of Arkansas has cut short some of the opportunities for work in the earlier months of the year. Continued mechanization of the work previously done with the use of mules and horses will continue to reduce the labor needs during the earlier months, and will serve to accentuate the seasonal swings of employment in each area. Therefore, less labor will be employed during the first six or seven months of the year. Effects on the income of the workers will be proportional with the employment distribution, unless, of course, a new migration pattern is developed.

MONTHLY DISTRIBUTION OF AVERAGE DAYS WORKED, BOTTOMS AND UPLAND, ARKANSAS, 1938, AND LAURENS AND FLORENCE COUNTIES, SOUTH CAROLINA, 1937



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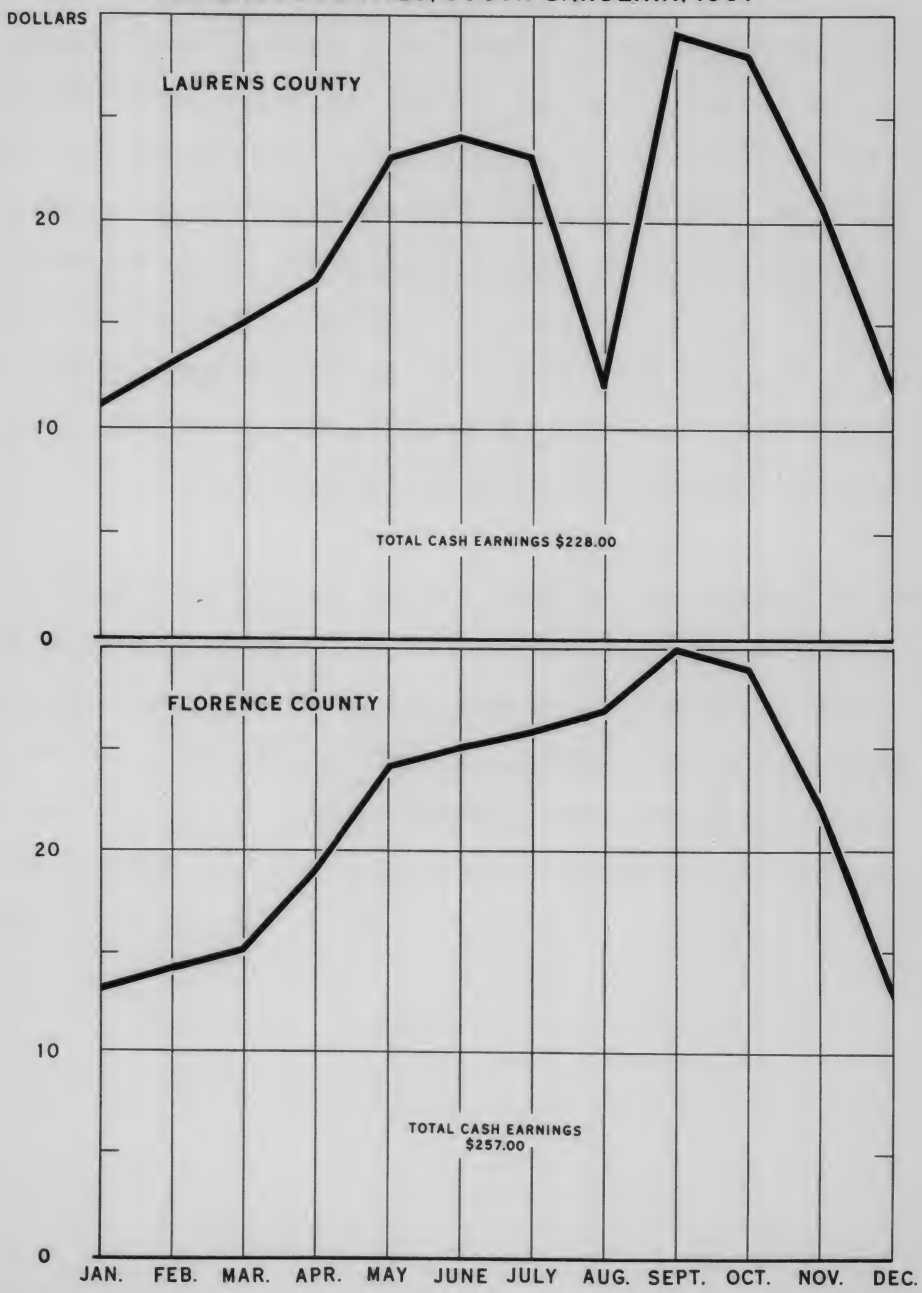
MONTHLY DISTRIBUTION WAGE FAMILY INCOME, LAURENS AND FLORENCE COUNTIES, SOUTH CAROLINA, 1937



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Women and Children Labor of Sharecropper and Wage Laborer Families

An average of 1.6 women and children per sharecropper family in Chicot, Mississippi, and Pulaski Counties, Arkansas, worked in the fields in 1938. The average family consisted of 4.0 persons so that 40 percent of the working force of the family were women and children. Ten of the working children of the 107 families were under 10 years of age, and two of the women laborers were over 60 years of age.

In the average wage families 35 percent of the working force was supplied by women and children. Four of the children of the 83 families were less than 10 years of age and two of the women were over 60 years of age.

In Laurens and Florence Counties, South Carolina, one-half of the average sharecropper labor force were women and children. In the 149 families there were 12 child laborers under 10 years of age and four women over 60. Of the 75 wage families averaging 4.3 persons per family there were 1.6 women and children laborers. In the wage families there was only one child laborer under 10 years of age and two women workers over 60.

Table 21.- Number of women and children of sharecropper and wage laborer families, included in sample studies, who were working in 1937 and 1938

Item	Total	Average per family	Age of workers: Under 10	10-12	13-15	16-18	19-60	Over 60
Chicot, Mississippi, and Pulaski Counties, Arkansas, 1938 1/								
Sharecropper families (107 families)	169	1.6	10	18	25	28	86	2
Children	81	0.8	10	18	25	28	--	--
Male	41	0.4	4	10	11	16	--	--
Female	40	0.4	6	8	14	12	--	--
Women	88	0.8	--	--	--	--	86	2
Wage laborer families (83 families)	102	1.2	4	10	15	11	60	2
Children	40	0.5	4	10	15	11	--	--
Male	26	0.3	2	5	11	8	--	--
Female	14	0.2	2	5	4	3	--	--
Women	62	0.7	--	--	--	--	60	2
Laurens and Florence Counties, South Carolina, 1937 2/								
Sharecropper families (149 families)	419	2.8	12	67	83	80	173	4
Children	242	1.6	12	67	83	80	--	--
Male	125	0.8	5	32	44	44	--	--
Female	117	0.8	7	35	39	36	--	--
Women	177	1.2	--	--	--	--	173	4
Wage laborer families (75 families)	117	1.6	1	10	21	14	69	2
Children	46	0.6	1	10	21	14	--	--
Male	21	0.3	0	6	10	5	--	--
Female	25	0.3	1	4	11	9	--	--
Women	71	1.0	--	--	--	--	69	2

1/ Average size of sharecropper families 4.0 persons; average size of wage families 3.4 persons.

2/ Average size of sharecropper families 5.9 persons; average size of wage families 4.3 persons.

For source, see Table 4 for Arkansas counties and Table 6 for South Carolina counties.

Home-Use Goods as a Means of Improving Economic Status

In table 22 is presented a comparison of income, including that secured by cropper and wage laborer families from home-use goods in 1937, with the income that would have accrued to those families had they produced all of their home-use needs.

Most of the items of home-use needs could have been produced, but as the table indicates, a deficiency of between $138.50 and $191.65 was the rule. Their total net income, including home-use goods and perquisites, would have been increased by 21.8 and 28.0 percent in the case of share-croppers in Florence and Laurens Counties, South Carolina. Wage family incomes would have increased by as much as 39.9 and 54.8 percent in Laurens and Florence Counties, had they produced all of their needs.

The production of these items appears to be associated with security of tenure. Workers, even if they recognize the importance of producing many of these items, can little afford to invest funds for the production of livestock products with the short tenure experience in prospect for them. Effort should now be initiated to lay a foundation for stability and security of farm laborers, just as efforts already are under way with tenants.

Table 22.- Comparison of home use goods actually produced with needs 1/ and the effect on total net income if needs were produced, South Carolina

Item	Net income	Food needs in excess of production	Net income if needs produced	Percent increase in income if needs produced	Percent of needs produced
	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Percent	Percent
Laurens County					
Sharecropper	560.90	157.85	718.75	28.0	41.5
Wage family	347.32	138.50	485.82	39.9	18.8
Florence County					
Sharecropper	652.77	141.75	794.52	21.8	48.2
Wage family	349.60	191.65	541.25	54.8	10.7

1/ "Needs" as used here are those described in "Food and Food Needs for South Carolina" by Stoanson, Lagrone, and Terry, Regional Circular No. 2, Division of Farm Management and Costs, Region V, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Atlanta, Georgia, May 25, 1939.

For source, see Table 6.

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